

BATMAN HUSH



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SINC

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BATMAN HUSH



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BATMAN: HUSH

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INTRODUCTION

JIM LEE & JEPH LOEB

On a very early Saturday morning in late February 2005, Jim Lee and Jeph Loeb stepped into a chat room to talk about their experiences producing **BATMAN: HUSH**. They chatted with senior editor Bob Greenberger, who attempted to keep the discussion on track. The conversation touches on every aspect of the year-long event, so *if you have not read the story previously, you may want to read this discussion after the fact.*



DC: OK, now to begin, if you guys are ready and alert.

Jim: Ready, but not alert!

Jeph: This is so strange, doing an interview in a private chat room. Does it come with a video cam of some girl in Canada smoking?

Jim: I can arrange that.

Jeph: Jim can arrange *anything*.

Jim: What is Warren Ellis's AIM again?

DC: I'm thinking we can start from the end and work our way around. What was your general feeling about the reaction to HUSH as the event ended?

Jim: Has it ended?

Jeph: In terms of what?

Jim: I wasn't being entirely flippant.

DC: Well, the fans seemed somewhat divided...some loved what you did with Tommy and Two-Face, others felt Catwoman should have stayed...

Jim: Ahh...storywise.

Jeph: Okay, well, we did something that stopped the industry. Everybody waited for their next issue of BATMAN for a year. Wait...they waited *each month* for their next issue. We were never that late!

DC: No, that was CAMELOT 3000 #12.

Jim: That came out?

DC: Finally.

Jeph: Anyway, no matter *what* we did, whether it *turned out to be* a dream, or *if* Hush turned out to be Superman, *some* folks were going to be divided. You can't have something that huge not create that kind of division.

DC: Did you like that each issue, each twist and turn, got everyone talking?

Jeph: First off, I'm sure I'll say this about a million times during this interview, we didn't know what people were going to think.

Jim: But it was cool to hear and read all their theories about who Hush was.

DC: Was one particular reaction to a story point a surprise to either of you?

Jeph: It's a year-long mystery and whenever I've done that—both in LONG HALLOWEEN and in DARK VICTORY, I've worried that by issue three, folks are saying, "I could care less who Hush is."

But in fairness, we had a secret weapon. Jim was drawing really pretty.

DC: No kidding. So was Tim Sale.

Jeph: Yes, but Tim was growing into the illustrator he is now. Jim was a star. He'd never drawn monthly super-hero comics for DC, and it'd been like 1000 years (he's very old) since the *X-Men* days—but there was a hunger. Jim fueled that hunger.

Jim: Well, I think you set things up pretty good in terms of red herrings.

DC: Speaking of the red herrings, the Jason Todd thing seems to have taken on a life (ahem) of its own.

Jeph: Jason was always part of it. What startled me was folks guessed in the second issue. That's how good they were.

DC: Ah. And his spirit has since played a part in several other Bat stories so you started something.

Jim: Surprisingly, not many guessed 'til the very end and even then, I think many were guessing from using their understanding of how whodunnits are set up more than anything else.

Jeph: The problem with mysteries in comics is the audience is smarter than the detective. They've seen it *all*. Jim was the best reader since he could constantly tell me when we were hitting it or not.

DC: Is that one reason why you use so many villains in your mysteries, to keep readers guessing?

Jeph: Sure. But never at the expense of storytelling.

Jim: It was never the intent at the start.

Jeph: And again, I had *Jim*. I wasn't an idiot. (No matter what Jim says.) Jim doing the Joker. Jim doing Catwoman. C'mon!

Jim: It wasn't until halfway through that I noticed what was happening villain-wise, that's how slow I am...

Jeph: LOL

Jim: It was a romp though, and more important, it never felt to me to be shoehorned in. The only thing I asked for was Robin and Batman running the rooftops again.

Jeph: Hang on, he asked for a *lot* more than that!

DC: Such as...?

Jim: Early morning massages. But only Jeph offered his services, so that was the end of that discussion.

Jeph: Mostly for a script on time. He's really demanding that way! Having Jim bring ideas to the table really made it exciting.

DC: Did Jim have much input in story points other than running on the rooftops?

Jeph: For example, and it's one of the things I love, he said he wanted to do a scene in the Opera House.

Jim: I offered comments the way yer mom does in the backseat while yer driving.

Jeph: I knew that Harley Quinn was going to do a robbery, but I didn't know where...so I married the two ideas and it's one of my favorite moments.

DC: The Opera House also allowed for some good character bits with Tommy, Leslie and Selina.

Jeph: And Jim drew the @\$% out of that Opera House!

Jim: Yeah, that was definitely one instance where I was surprised (astounded) how Jeph wove that suggestion into the storyline so effortlessly. I said, "Batman in the Opera House"...instead I got five pages of Leslie...but it was all good.

Jeph: No, you said you wanted an entire issue of Leslie, and I cut you down to five pages. He was always doing that. He wanted more Alfred, more Leslie. I think he has stock in Geritol.

Jim: To keep things interesting, I drew Leslie with a thong on, but hush is the word, shhhh.

Jeph: Is there a Leslie action figure?

Jim: Wave 7.

DC: Complete with medical kit.

Jim: And thong!

Jeph: And a thong. See, that's when it gets scary, when we finish each other's thoughts. It happened a lot on HUSH, and often on the page.

Jim: I needed a model for Leslie....

DC: What got left on the cutting room floor, so to speak?

Jeph: Actually, we didn't have *time* to cut things. We were moving like a train.

Jim: Hmmm, if there were cut scenes, I didn't get to see any of them although there were panels here and there that I altered elements of...some of which are in this edition.

Jeph: Jim wasn't going to draw something twice, and I wrote a script that was very tight.

DC: Were there bits you wanted to write but ran out of pages or time?

Jim: Yeah, once I ate up all my lead time, that's when the challenge of doing the book every 30 days got very real.

Jeph: There were scenes we *changed*, mostly, like I said, to keep me honest, because Jim is also a great editor, but nothing got left out.

Jim: There were times when I ran out of script. I can say that now with a straight face...thank god for psychotherapy and lithium, whew!

Jeph: Yes, but I still have the scars—you and your cat-o'-nine-tails.

DC: Draw what you know...

Jim: You guys are scaring me now...

Jeph: I can tell you one thing that I remember: the whole story was done, last script came in and I get a call from Jim. He loves it all except the last three pages. I'm standing on a ledge on the Chrysler Building with a noose around my neck. He made an excellent point. The scene was with Batman and Superman (mostly because I wanted to transition to SUPERMAN/BATMAN!)—but I felt it was important to get across the notion that no matter who left him, Superman would always be there. But, Jim said that he wanted to see the scene with Catwoman. That the story had always been a love story and we had to get back to that, and you know what...he was right. I cursed him, but he was right. Last three pages and I had gotten it wrong. *Killed* me. I love how it turned out though. I just hate Jim.

DC: You'll get over it, when the scars heal.

Jeph: They would, but I keep having to do these interviews!

Jim: And Jeph being a great collaborator really took that in stride—and reworked it. I was a bit surprised. I was expecting a “Yeah, well maybe yer right but let's talk after you win your first Eisner, buddy...”

Jeph: It was never like that. It was like a marriage: you have to listen to your partner.

DC: Anyway, Jim, what about the rush to produce, how did that affect your drawing, if at all? I know it caused Scott, Richard and Alex some late nights.

Jim: We were all up so late, it was early...

Jeph: Alex had it the worst. Mister Perfectionist had to get it right and dammit, if it wasn't better by dawn.

DC: And it shows, the book was gorgeous.

Jeph: It still is. People are reading it now! They have it in their hands! They're right behind you!

Jim: Yeah, in all seriousness, Jeph and I were a team from the get go...and the dialogue went both ways...there were several points where Jeph made suggestions/requests/demands for changes in the art and 99.9% of the time, he was dead on with his comments. They say creators create for themselves; to a certain extent, at least for me, I felt we were creating for one another, as gushy as that sounds.

DC: Jim, did you have a specific color scheme in mind for Alex to work with?

Jeph: I loved how they used red, which is so effective against the blues/purple. And Alex's watercolors on the flashbacks...wait...that was Jim...right!

DC: Whose idea was it for the watercolors?

Jim: Jeph's.

Jeph: Uh... I don't think so.

Jim: Not watercolors *per se*, but using a different look for flashbacks.

Jeph: I think it was more like in the script I asked for something like what Tim had done in THE LONG HALLOWEEN and DARK VICTORY, where Tim used inkwash. But, Jim came up with the whole look; it was really thrilling. My favorite was the Green Lantern page. Again, that's another one of those moments where Jim wanted to draw Green Lantern [he meant Hal Jordan], but I tried to make it work.

DC: Using Alan Scott made more sense given their ages.

Jim: It was my first watercolor interiors; I did a cover or two back in the '90s at Marvel. Punisher on a rooftop on a gargoyle in the rain...good training for Batman!

DC: Absolutely.

Jim: But finishing the thought about Scott and Alex—at least for Scott, he actually works slower than I do on a page. Alex and I fine-tuned pages well into the night, working 'til the last possible second...thank god for FTPs and the Internet—this would have been impossible a decade ago.

Jeph: Well, all Scott had was a few scribbles....Jim is so freakin' lazy...it was all Scott. Scott deserves the interview! The money! The women!

Jim: As long as I get the tequila...it's all good.

But seriously, Scott's speed of inking is not particularly fast given the time he puts into every panel, so there were times when I was jamming...doing two pages a night and poor Scott got slammed between a pile of pages and an editor.

Jeph: Okay, you caught me. If you saw the finished pencils, you'd be *astounded* by Jim's detail.

DC: Any comments about the role Richard Starkings played?

Jim: Richard and Jeph worked a lot together and I think like Scott and Alex with me, it gave and continues to give Jeph that confidence and assurance that his work, his words, will look awesome on a page.

Jeph: Richard is my good luck charm. More than anyone, he knows my work, the flow of my words, even lines or stuff I've used before. I can't do it without him. Like Jim said, Richard is to me as the inker is to the a penciller. He puts my words in the right place, the right way. It may sound easy, it may look easy...but it's not.

DC: What was your working relationship with Bob Schreck like?

Jeph: Bob was supportive. I think it's important to point out that *nobody* at DC or in the comic industry knew we were doing this except about three people. And those three people didn't think we'd ever finish it, so for the first five issues, we were still a myth. We weren't on the schedule; we were doing something that was never going to be finished!

Jim: Yeah, now everyone expects us to be on time...sheesh! It was better to be considered a deadline nightmare and come through with flying colors at the last moment.

Jeph: Jim killed it for late artists everywhere.

Jim: With reliability comes boredom. Editors will now hate me...

Jeph: Oh, they do already.

Jim: Then again, I am late on SUPERMAN so what am I saying!?

Jeph: I love Jim's idea of late. *One* week. He should talk to Kevin Smith someday.

Jim: Bob Schreck made sure we weren't spinning in circles, which is a habit I think creators can fall into when they are working too closely on a book.

Jeph: Well, once we were up and running, Bob had to run interference for us when we wanted to do something that was...touchy.

Jim: One time, Bob had to walk me off the edge when I wanted to add some last-second Arabic writing on Batman's blade. It's all about weighing priorities, and Bob was key in that.

Jeph: But, it's important to point out that none of this would have happened without Mark Chiarello. So it's really all *his* fault.

DC: Explain more...

Jeph: It's was either Mark's really stupid idea or really brilliant idea to have Jim and me do the monthly.

Jim: It was one of my goals with HUSH, to show that it could be done (monthlies by an Image artist!) and more important that I could do it. Mostly to show myself it could be done and I knew if I had a monthly rather than a special project, I would sit down and get the work done.

Jeph: Chiarello came to L.A. and told me that Jim wanted to work with me. Then he went to Jim and told *him* that I wanted to work with Jim. Both lies. But by that time, we were both trapped!

Jim: Yeah, damn Chiarello. And speaking of craziness...why are we sitting at our computers at 6 on a Saturday morning.

DC: Yeah, me and my schedules...

Jim: I just hope you two are fully clothed....

Jeph: Jim really had something to prove, after he fell for the oldest trick in the book, by proving whether or not he could even do it. There were people at DC who were actually betting money against us! (Okay, I had a side bet, but I never bet on baseball!) That gave it an engine. What was the most rewarding was that the sales went *up* with every issue. Folks were caught up in the story! But...make no mistake, Jim was the Tom Cruise they had come to see. My job was to keep their butts in the seat and tell their friends it was a great ride. Somehow it all worked.

DC: Jeph, was there a problem in getting DC to approve Batman revealing his I.D. to Catwoman?

Jeph: The scene was written the way you read it now. DC wasn't sure that is what they wanted—to make *that* big a change. But, remember, the first issue hadn't come out yet! We were that far ahead.

Jim: And when you've been in the business for some time, as a veteran, you don't want to mess around and not be 100% sure that every facet of the book will be stellar.

Jeph: And I'm terrible at politics, I wanted to set the building on fire and kill the rest. But, Jim kept it cool. He said, *repeatedly*, "Just wait until the first issue comes out." He was right...once it became a monster; it got easier to explain why it was good for the book to have something that stuck.

Jim: First time things went to plan.

DC: Brad Meltzer had to deal with mindwiping Batman in IDENTITY CRISIS and you had to be cautious with the reveal...is it difficult writing such a protected icon?

Jeph: Well, and I mean this without any brown-nosing intended, but DC has always given me a great deal of rope. So all I could do was write the best story I could and hoped they liked it. I *never* write anything just to see if I can get away with it.

Jeph: And I can't imagine what IC would have been like without the mindwipe, any more so than I can imagine what HUSH would've been like without the Selina/Bruce reveal. But...starting out, there was some hesitation.

Jim: But seriously, I had some prior experience with this, when things take off for a storyline, the impossible becomes possible, editorially speaking, which makes perfect sense...you don't want to blow your big moments (in a shared universe) on a project no one is reading.

Conversely, when things take off, I think readers expect bigger payoffs...why else would they be so invested in following a story if there wasn't a cool change or twist for their favorite characters? To Jeph's credit, I think he had it all laid out to go both ways. Meaning, he had in his head a satisfying a story no matter what we could do or not do status quo wise.

Jeph: I wanted the first issue—actually it was in the very first pitch, the first outline, everything!—that Poison Ivy was going to *kiss* Catwoman in the last page, much like in CAMELOT 3000 (what are the odds that we'd mention that twice in an interview?) and the script came in and it was like I had written that Hitler won the war. Screaming, yelling, throwing pies. So, that had to be changed. In my mind, they are still making out now. To this day.

DC: What about your reaction to the immediate sellouts complete with additional printings?

Jeph: Nobody can predict it a blockbuster or else we'd do it every time. Jim had this sense, we had picked numbers, I went low, he went high, but not high enough. Poor Bob Wayne. He'd set the print order and panic that it was way too high and they'd be gone in a day.

Jim: I think that's one of the things that we all will come to appreciate with time, how HUSH really was a phenomenon and continues to be...seriously, how many toys, calendars and editions will there be!

DC: You started and ended, a year later, with second printings.

Jeph: The fact that the last issue sales were three times bigger than the first was testimony to how much folks got caught up in it.

Jim: Jeph is so jaded to collected editions...*everything* he does is put between cardboard.

Jeph: Why the hell would I be up at this hour?!

Jim: But for me, this is a first...and honestly, the Absolute Edition is the one version I have been dying to have in my hands since the day we ended the series.

Jeph: The whole story in one place *and* at the size that Jim's artwork needs to be seen and hasn't been.

Jim: Yeah, *big* and *oversized*.

Jeph: So cool that way.

Jim: And the design by Robbin Brosterman is knockdown dead gorgeous.

DC: Jeph, you had it that the Riddler was the master manipulator from the beginning? Why him?

Jeph: I love the Riddler. Tim and I had often played him the fool, and that needed to be righted.

DC: You and everyone else.

Jeph: There had to be a man behind the curtain. The "who was Hush?" really wasn't the mystery. It was who was doing this that was the real fake out.

Jim: I always liked the Riddler...so it was great to see him come to the fore. He made more sense to me as a character than someone who controls plants...I mean, how threatening are plants...now words, words cut to the bone.

Jeph: And if you go back and read it with that in mind, you really see what we were doing. I just loved the idea that he had solved the ultimate riddle: Who is Batman?

Jim: And he can't share it.

Jeph: And the tragedy is that like a riddle, it's no fun once everyone knows.

DC: OK, was there anything that didn't work for you across the 12 issues?

Jeph: Once it was over, the one thing I would've done was introduce Harold at some point. I know that for some folks he came out of left field, or they didn't know him...but I was worried he'd stick so far out, you'd know. And he would've had to die early.

Jim: I would have redrawn the first three issues.

DC: All three?

Jim: Batman looks so different to me at the end than the beginning.

Jeph: I love that, though.

Jim: Actually I wanted to change pages from the first issue. They were drawn so long ago and we had time before it came out for a change like that, but Scott Williams talked me off that ledge.

Jeph: I thought that as the story went, Batman was getting smaller; he was being beaten down. And physically, I'd add that he wasn't sleeping or eating. It was pretty cool that way.

Jim: I'm on a lot of ledges these days...

Jeph: We all have our ledges. Jim's is thinner than most.

Jim: But Scott wanted to see the evolution in the look and felt that was one of the things he liked as a fan...seeing an artist's version come into its own as a series progressed...this is something he recalled from his fan days. So that convinced me to let it go.

Jeph: But that's why Jim's so good—he can't let it just *be*. And that's where Scott was a huge help. You need to let it stand.

DC: Was it a complication to provide a 6-page interlude for *Wizard*? Did it interfere with the storytelling?

Jim: I love that interlude.

Jeph: Again, another story that went two different ways. I wrote the script and in it, Batman and Catwoman made love—with their masks on—I'm not kidding. And Jim called and said, "This feels like...something children shouldn't see." So, I threw it all out. I've never done that.

Jim: I think when you're doing a mystery storyline, especially as you get deep into it, there is a tendency to have it become more and more plot driven as the story approaches the end. And Jeph wrote this great interlude...character bits right in near the end. The scene between Alfred and Selina is one of my favorites. So much more going on there than you see (and read).

Jeph: It all got thrown out and I wrote it again. Thank *gawd* that it was only six pages.

DC: Your Alfred comes off as less acerbic as other writers have made him post-Miller.

Jim: It made them feel alive to me, which I think is the highest compliment you can give a writer.

Jeph: Alfred *can* be acerbic.

Jim: Strangely enough there was a circle of fans who wanted Alfred to be Hush!

DC: Weird.

Jeph: Look, clearly Miller was affected, like I was, by Hobson, the butler in *Arthur*.

Jim: <sings> "between the lights and Gotham City...."

Jeph: But, what he never got to—I would never say missed—was that Hobson loved Arthur and knew he had to have him grow up. That's that scene: Catwoman had to realize Batman wasn't a tie she could steal.

DC: You use Oracle, Huntress, Robin and Nightwing but not Batgirl. A reason for her absence?

Jeph: The truth about Batgirl?

DC: Yep.

Jeph: I'm a Barbara Gordon fan.

Jim: Hear hear.

Jeph: I wanted the flashback to show who she was, and Jim drew her beautifully. I loved the transition of her face in the past to the present as Oracle. And I love Oracle.

Jim: And I think it gets confusing and convoluted to show another version of Batgirl because Cassandra, as a character, isn't tied into the original Batgirl.

Jeph: The new Batgirl belongs to a different generation, which is fine—I just prefer Babs.

Jim: And Cassie isn't tied into Batman the way Robin and Nightwing are tied into Batman. Robin and Nightwing speak to Batman and his guilt *vis à vis* Jason. Batgirl would have been a distracting cameo; that said, I have warmed up to the character a lot since the end of HUSH...maybe Cassie will have her day in HUSH 2 and maybe there will be a reason why she wasn't in the storyline because of Shiva!!! D'oh, there goes the surprise cliffhanger ending....

Jeph: What I found in this story, more than anything, was that the wound caused by Bruce's parents' death was traumatizing but couldn't keep the fire still stoked. Jason—the death of a child—that was on Batman's watch. Gosh, that's powerful. And again, like with Gwen Stacy, Jason was being forgotten. That was wrong—at least to me.

Jim: This is the great thing about comics, how continuity can be so binding yet at the same time, so fluid and ever-changing.

DC: There's some obvious affection in the use of Jim Gordon here.

Jim: Getting to draw Gordon in a scene with Batman and the Joker was a highlight for me. Jeph writes an awesome Gordon and really showed what element he plays in Batman's mind. He has the most emotion of everyone in the book.

Jeph: He's Archie Goodwin [the late great writer/editor who edited THE LONG HALLOWEEN]. My heart aches every time I write him. The way that Archie trusted me when nobody else did.

DC: Alfred grounds Batman at home, and Gordon grounds him at work...right?

Jeph: Actually, Alfred *works* for Bruce. It's different. Gordon has made a choice to trust this man.

Jim: Gordon is Batman's rational side in an insane city.

Jeph: Alfred loves Bruce—not Batman. Gordon loves the city and has decided, for now, to let Batman help him.

DC: Does someone in the cast love Bruce *and* Batman or is it always divided?

Jeph: Great question. There are so few people who know both. I'd say Barbara since she gets to know. And Harold! That's actually a big part of the tragedy. I loved his last scene. Jim just *nailed* the emotion of the strip of faces.

DC: But does Harold really know Bruce? He's always in the cave, not the manor.

Jeph: I think he knew that Bruce took him in. Again, Batman has this “working” thing going on. Even with Selina—in the interlude—it was “Now we have to go back to work.” He can be such an a\$\$hole!

DC: True. And it's the work that causes him to leave her at the end.

Jeph: Well...it's his inability to trust that ruins it—he just hides behind the work. And if everyone you ever loved either (a) betrayed you or (b) died, you'd be a little skittish around the ladies too!

DC: He trusts so few...as you write him, he even has his suspicions about Superman at times.

Jeph: Oh, yeah. He doesn't get Clark at all.

DC: HUSH 2, Jim mentioned. Is there a story to tell?

Jeph: Sure. Someday. Never say never.

Jim: I think there is. I think there's so much material that is ripe for a revisit down the line, but it would have to be something *new*.

Jeph: Jim and I talked about it... he made an excellent point... we don't want to do chapters 13-25. It has to be new, stand on its own.

Jim: I mean it's one thing to have Catwoman and Batman call it a day but as we all know, it often gets *more* interesting the moment you say goodbye than when it's all good. Being all lovey-dovey is the easy part.

DC: Tommy is the first childhood friend we've seen of Bruce's prior to the murder. And now a childhood friend is added to *Batman Begins*. Coincidence or inspiration?

Jeph: I've not seen *Batman Begins*. They've been very, very generous to mention my writing as an influence (Miller's too) and we'll see.

DC: You guys can easily tell a fresh story and based on HUSH's success, the readers will come.

Jeph: Nothing is a guarantee.

DC: They will come and sample a first chapter.

Jeph: There have been enough sequel flops to sink Hollywood.

Jim: Yep.

Jeph: It's only about telling the story. And Jim won't saddle up unless it's there. Honestly, we're very lucky.

Jim: Readers will want the same high they got from the first series...and you can't replicate that feeling with just a sequel.

Jeph: We got to tell this great story, get to work together (well, at least I got to work with him) and if we're going to go back, it has to be right.

Jim: So you have to shoot for something different to shock that feeling back into them (the reader that is).

Jeph: Mostly because the expectations would be so high.

DC: Jim, have you wanted to write Batman on your own?

Jim: Writing is something I want to do; yes, someday...luckily I have a day job that pays the bills. So it's something I will do, just not sure when although I just came up with a small story for my SOLO issue...Chiarello will be happy, I hope. So the pilot light is on...I just need to start up the fire.

Jeph: I think the next one, Jim writes and I draw. LOL.

Jeph: And we'll settle that question once and for all—was it a hit because of the story or because of Jim? That's SOLO 3000, right?

Jim: Is that a dig at when it will come out or a third masked reference to CAMELOT 3000?!

Jeph: That would be the third. Always in threes.

Jim: Leslie for 22 pages...that's what I have in mind storywise for HUSH 2.

Jeph: Okay, let's just tell them: Leslie is Hush. There. Now stop asking.

Jim: I think Batman is a tough character to write. So many have done it, so few really speak to me. That's why it took so long for me to get a Batman-type project going, waiting for a writer who I thought "got" the character.

Jeph: The challenge, for me, is writing Batman for the right artist. It changes. Jim's story isn't Tim's story or Michael Turner's story or Ed McGuinness's story. *That's* a testament to the icon. He can withstand all those interpretations and that's just in my head. Don't get me started on Denny O'Neil, Steve Englehart, and Miller—all who defined the character for me in *my* own head.

DC: And Jim, you like talking to the writer before he starts writing the story, correct?

Jim: I like knowing who I work with.

DC: Do you feel a need, though, to talk through the story from the outset?

Jeph: And the blood ritual, Jim. Don't forget that part.

Jim: And that's one of the benefits of being a veteran in this business...you get the chance to work with people you know, people who are friends.

DC: er...blood?

Jeph: Secret stuff, Bob.

Jim: So secret I don't even know...and I was there, apparently!

Anyway, I think it's more important to see early on if you click with a collaborator, to know that you have the kind of rapport to, for example, make that call at the end of a 12-issue story and say, hey, the last three pages don't work for me.

Jeph: I love how Jim sees himself as a veteran now. Man, Brian Azzarello must've just beat the pants off you.

Jim: Shhh...don't reveal the secret Superman creator's ritual, Jeph....

But seriously, ahem, there are artists who work with writers they never talk to...I can't do that. I can't see how anyone can work that way. Jeph early on said to me, "I will be calling you every day, buddy, that's how I like to work." And shoot on a stick if he didn't. We would sometimes talk three or four times a night. Crazy late night talks...now transcripts of those conversations would be noteworthy—HA!

Jeph: Back on topic, I never understood—and it was done for *years*, when the writer turns in a script and the editor picks the artist. But, I came from screenwriting, you have to collaborate. It's all I knew.

Jim: Anyway, if I am not a veteran, then I certainly ain't the young, new guy.

DC: No, but you help usher in some of the new guys and mentor them, which is terrific.

Jim: Keeps my point of view fresh working together in a studio with new, young artists. I think working alone, by yourself, is the death knell for creativity...for me at least. We all need our Robins, Batgirls and Alfreds to keep us balanced.

Jeph: Still, I have to be responsible and not write—3000 huns come over the hill—because nobody can draw that, which is why the Opera House is *so insane*. I literally asked him to turn the lights *off* in the theater. But with Jim—and here's the trick, kids, you have to leave the lights on. You have to see the scene—he won't cheat. He understands mood—but underneath the shadow, it's all there.

Jim: Much like that shot of all the cars in the Batcave. I was cursing Jeph for allowing me to make the suggestion about the Opera House.

Jeph: Truly scary.

Jim: But I think those operatic scenes (ha ha) create the *big* backdrop for the little character moments to feel extra special.

Jeph: I wrote, "Let's see some of the Batmobiles" and I named a few. Jim calls back and says he can see this "Ferris wheel of cars."

Jim: It's like the environment which makes the little moments sing.

Jeph: I'm picturing a *real Ferris wheel*.

Jim: Saying I love you at a dinner isn't the same as saying it on the top of the Eiffel Tower—as a bad example.

Jeph: I had no idea what the *hell* he was talking about and then...the page arrived. I still don't understand how he pulled it off.

Jim: It's all about the romance, and Jeph knows that intrinsically, especially working in film.

Jeph: But it was a great setup for the line "Let's take the car"—boom, spread, "Great. Which one?"

DC: And it works as a character moment for Nightwing.

Jim: Yeah, the small bit becomes that much funnier in the scope of a big shot like that.

Jeph: Yes. That only works because of the image. That's Jim, that's his skill as a storyteller.

Jim: That's Jeph.

Jeph: Aw...group hug

DC: When Jim drew the pages, did you find yourself going back to tweak the dialogue?

Jeph: Sure, but I do that on any story. The time it takes to finish the script, there are weeks (in Jim's case days) after I see what the artist has done. Sometimes it's different and it has changed the rhythm particularly when you let the artist draw big. Big often means fewer words. But, once we got our music right, and I realized that Jim could draw anything—ah, that's when it got to be fun.

DC: That's a wrap, gentlemen. Enjoy your weekends.

Jeph: What's a weekend?

DC: Jim describes it as a time to run errands and not work.

Jim: Yeah, I have a list of 3000 things to do.

Jeph: Is that another CAMELOT 3000 reference? We're such geeks...

Jim: Yeah, I think talking comics at 6 in the morning pretty much establishes that!

Thanks, guys...

THE LEGEND OF THE BATMAN

CREATED
BY

**BOB
KANE**

**WHO HE IS AND
HOW HE CAME TO BE**
by JEPH LOEB • JIM LEE
with SCOTT WILLIAMS
and SINCLAIR, STARKINGS, DONTENVILLE, SCHRECK

*My name is Alfred Pennyworth.
I have been in the employ of
the Wayne family nearly all
of my adult life.*

*I have told this
story to no one.
Until now...*

*Dr. Thomas and
Martha Wayne
were good people.
Many considered
them the first family
of Gotham City.*

*If they had one indulgence,
it would be for their son,
Master Bruce. Something
I have come to understand
and emulate.*

*I cannot imagine
the man young Bruce
might have become
had his childhood
not been ripped from
him at gunpoint.*

*Suddenly orphaned and alone,
a chilling event took place.*

*There would be no grieving
for this child. No time would
be lost wishing he could
change these events.*

*There would only
be **the promise**.*

*That very night, on the
street stained with his
mother and father's blood,
he would make a vow to
rid the city of the evil
that had taken their lives.*

*It was, at best,
a fool's errand,
or so I told myself.*

*Using his family's wealth,
Master Bruce sought out the
world's greatest minds in
criminology, martial arts,
and the craft of detecting.*

*He knew that criminals are,
by nature, a cowardly
and superstitious lot.*

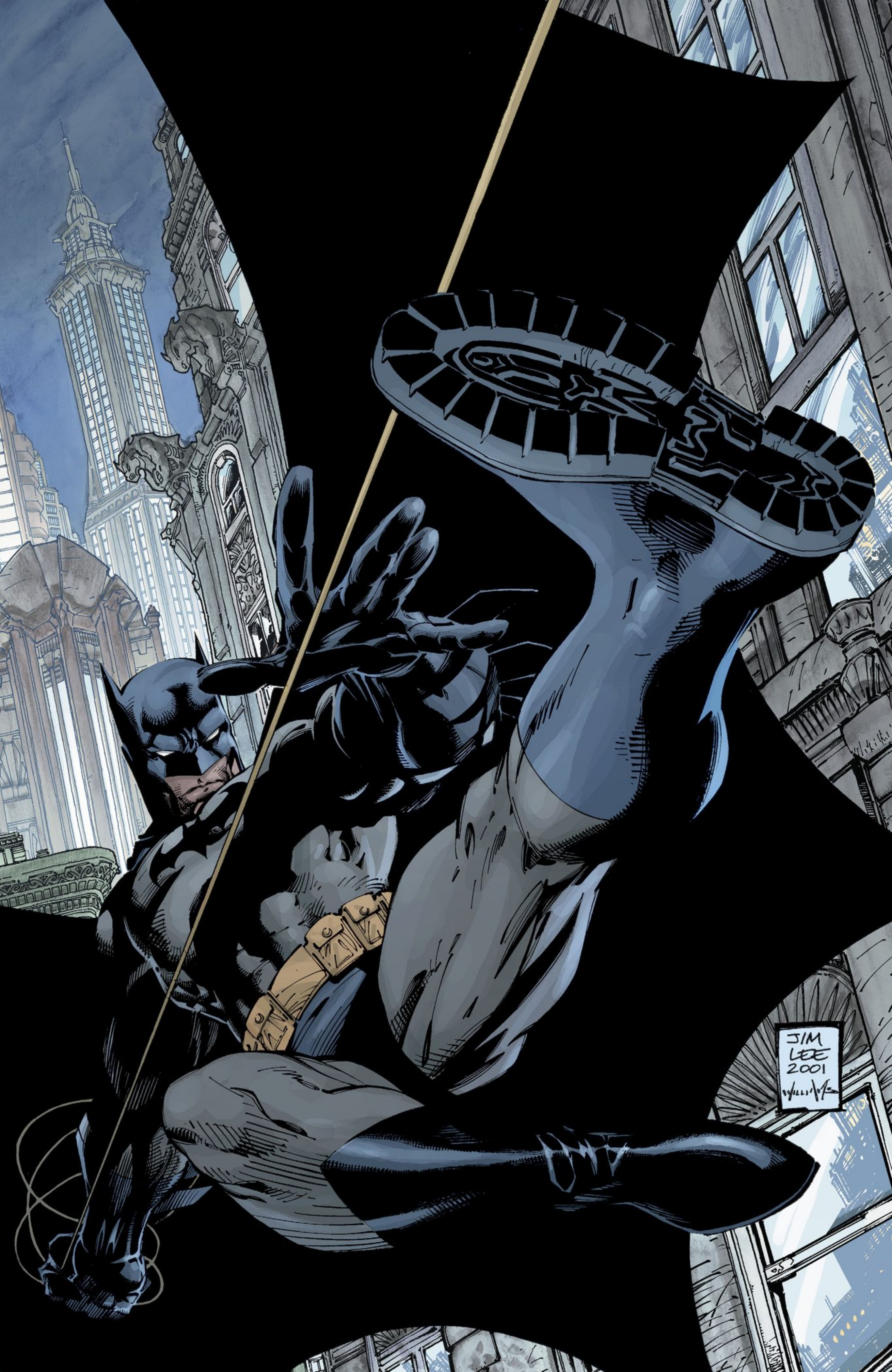
*They now call him
The Batman.*

*But, I will always see him as that
little boy, lost, struggling to find
a way to make up for not being able
to save his parents' lives.*

*And I...? I can only offer him
something I fear he sorely lacks.*

Love.

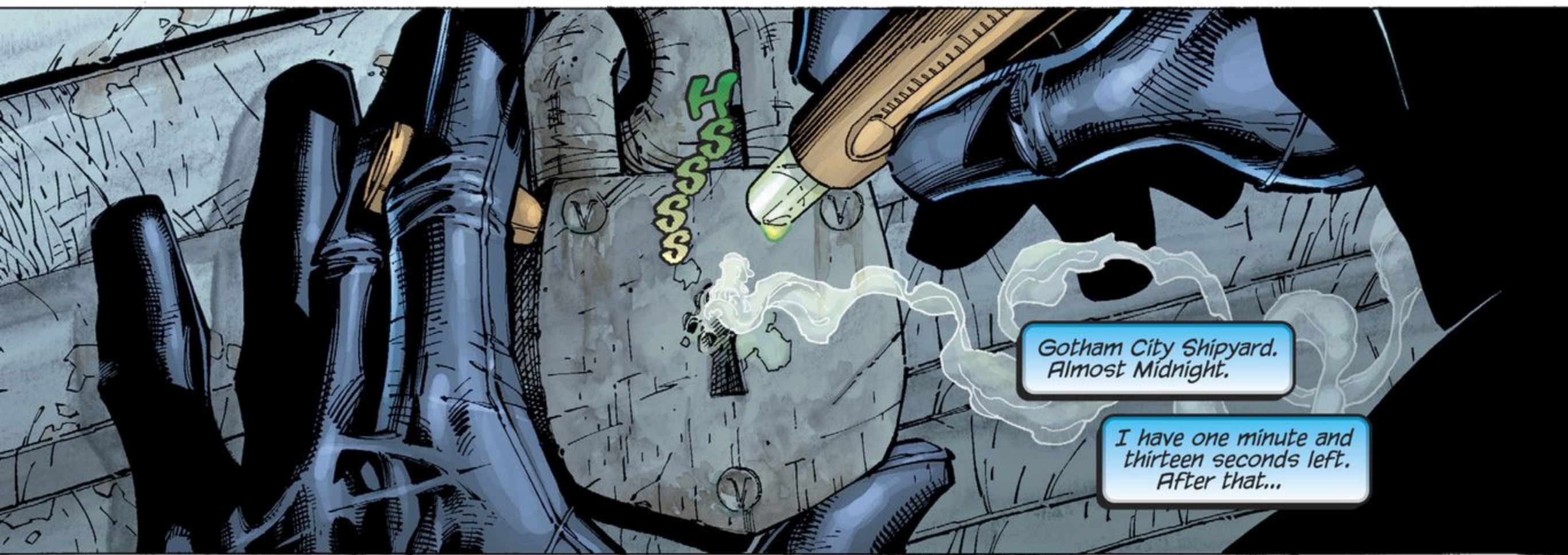




JIM
LEE
2001
w/lll/l/

THE RANSOM





Gotham City Shipyard.
Almost Midnight.

I have one minute and
thirteen seconds left.
After that...



UGNN

No time to pick the lock.
The acid is faster,
but unpredictable.
Had to risk it.



If I don't find the
hostage before
he gets back...



The F.B.I. and D.E.O.
cut the power. That will
either make my job
harder or easier. I'll know
in the next few seconds.

THIS IS N.N.
I'VE GOT MOVEMENT
DOWN HERE.

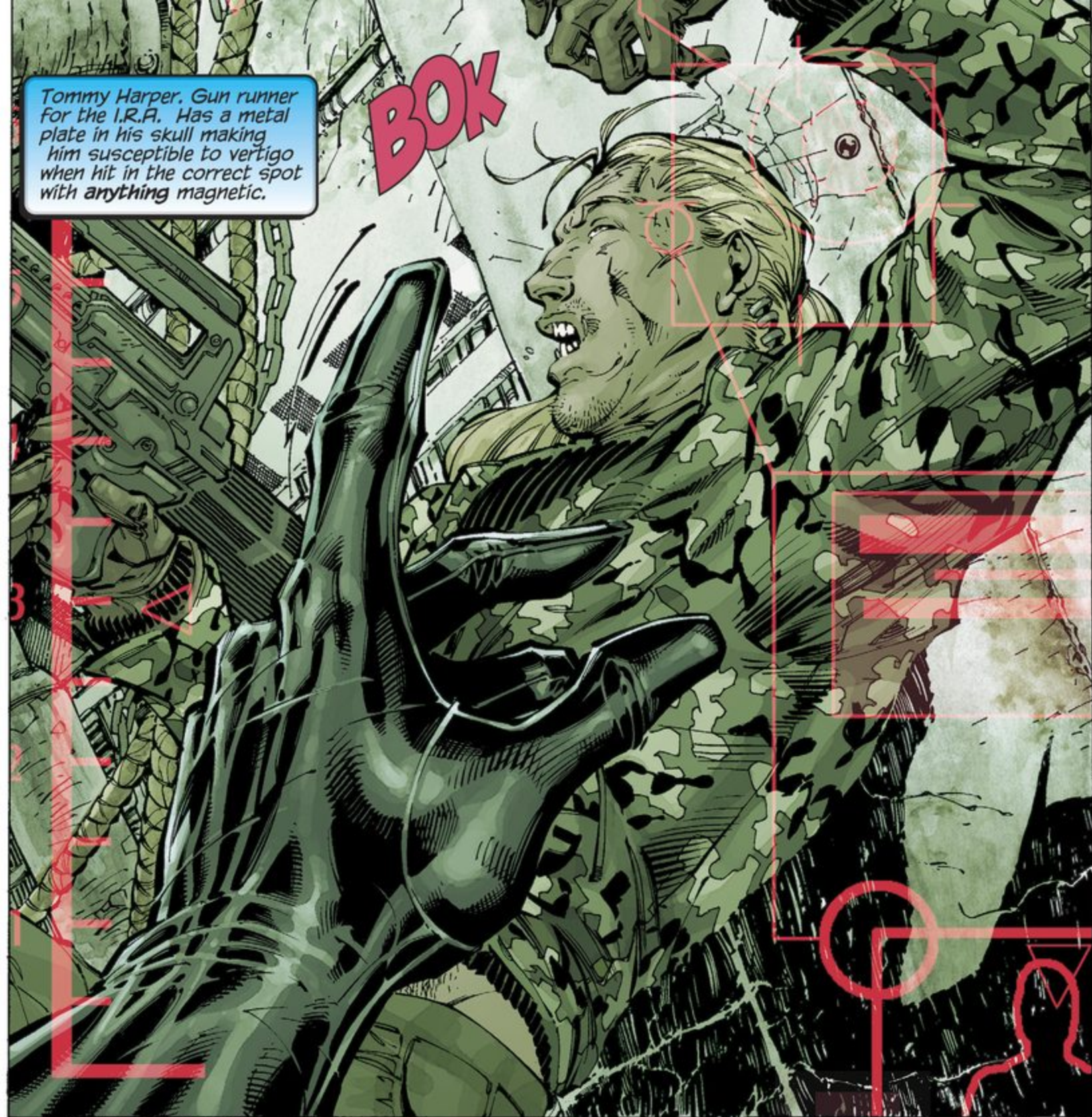
SUBJECT 101
HEIGHT: 2.00M
WEIGHT: 255KG

QUERYING DATABASE



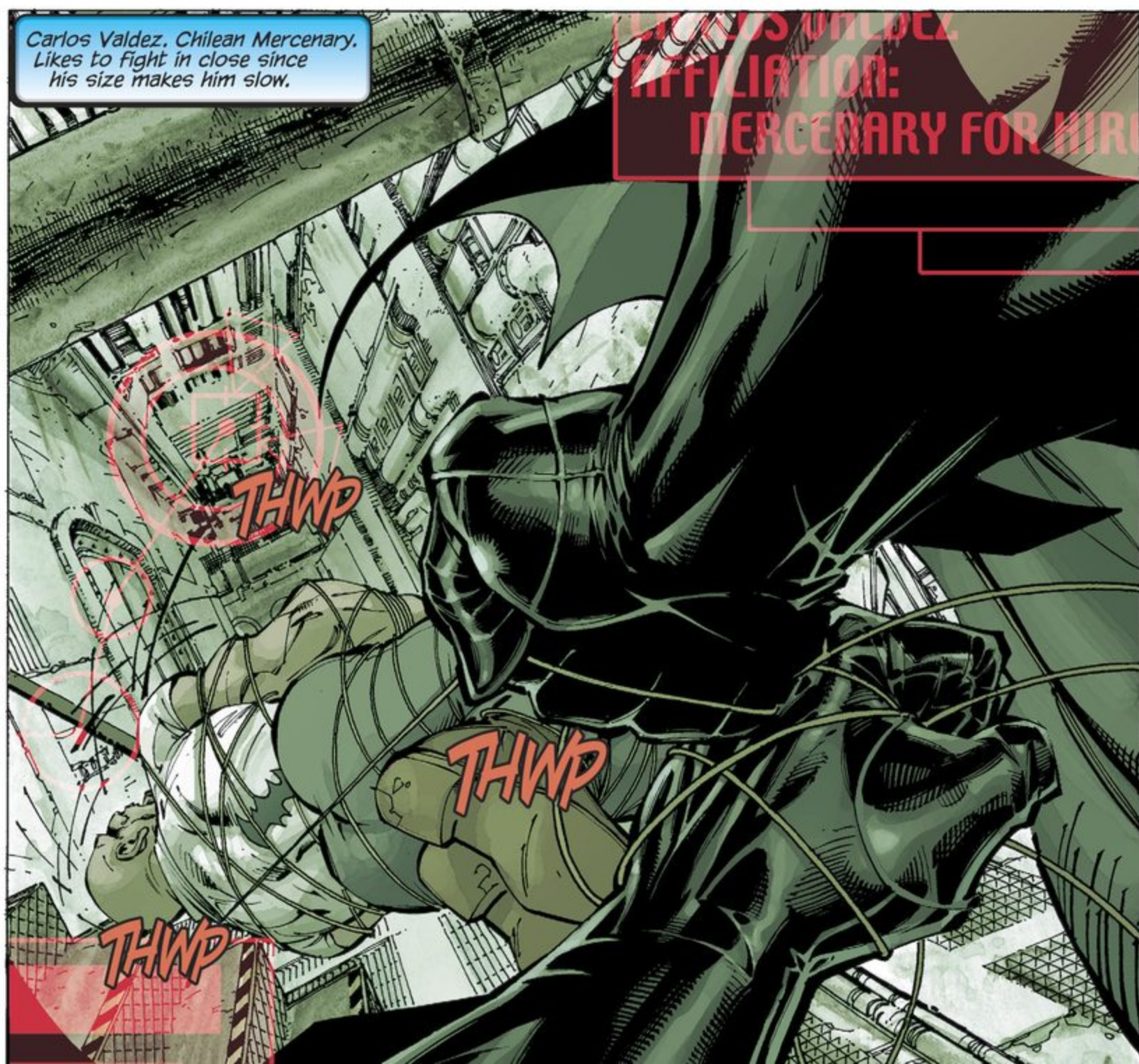
Nails Nathan, Former C.I.A. OP. Right-handed. The poison in the tips will paralyze his hand, arm, then go to work on his head.

15 SEC.



Tommy Harper, Gun runner for the I.R.A. Has a metal plate in his skull making him susceptible to vertigo when hit in the correct spot with anything magnetic.

BOK



Carlos Valdez, Chilean Mercenary. Likes to fight in close since his size makes him slow.

UNKNOWN ORIGIN
AFFILIATION:
MERCENARY FOR HIRE

THWP

THWP

THWP

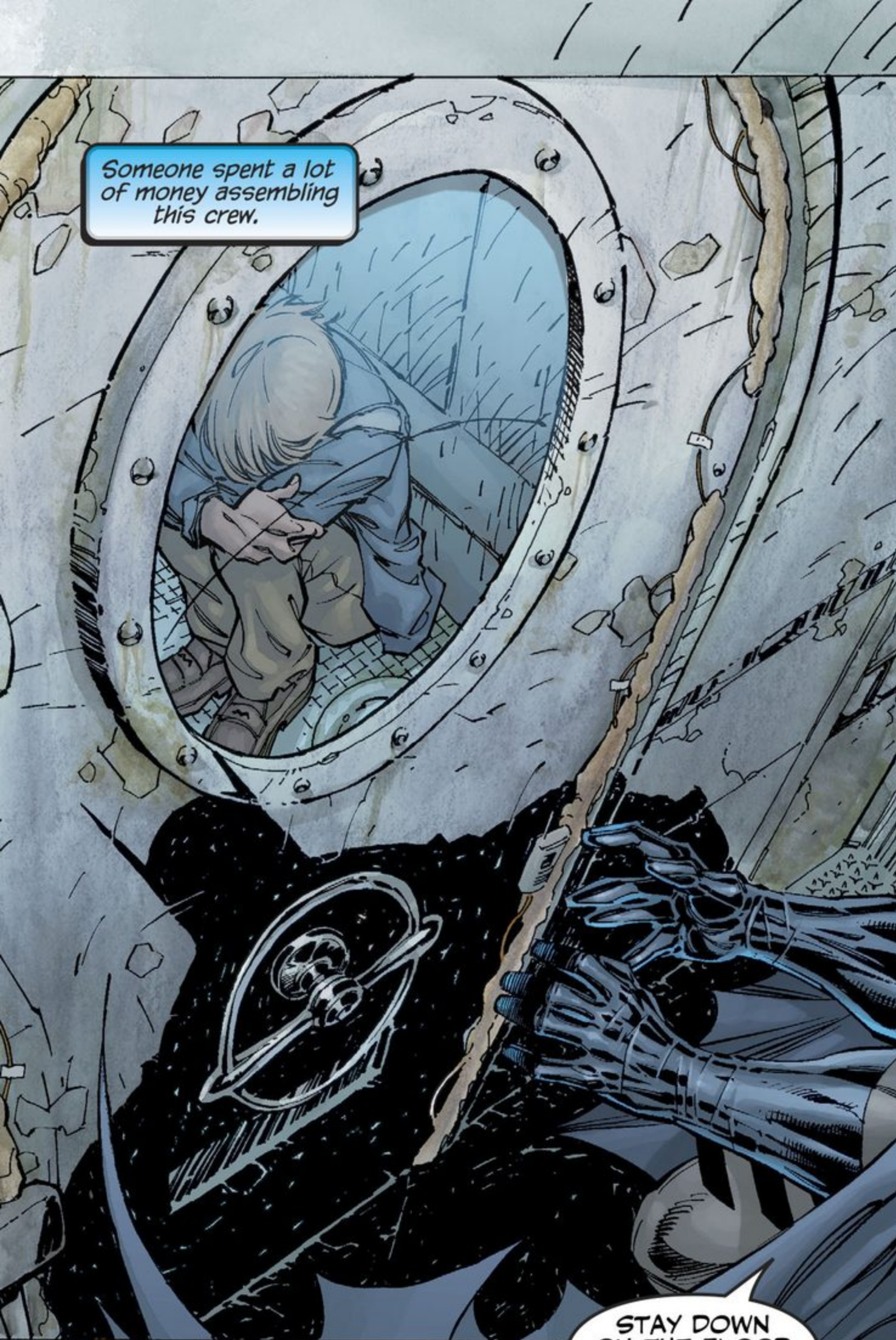


WHUMP

SP

Spider Hancock, Gotham City muscle. Broke two of his ribs three nights ago. They won't heal any time soon.





Someone spent a lot of money assembling this crew.

But, as Bruce Wayne will attest...

...you have to spend money to make money.

STAY DOWN ON THE FLOOR AND COVER YOUR EARS.



WHAROOOM

I made a promise on the grave of my parents to rid this city of the evil that took their lives. By day, I am Bruce Wayne, billionaire philanthropist. At night, criminals, a cowardly and superstitious lot, call me...

BATMAN

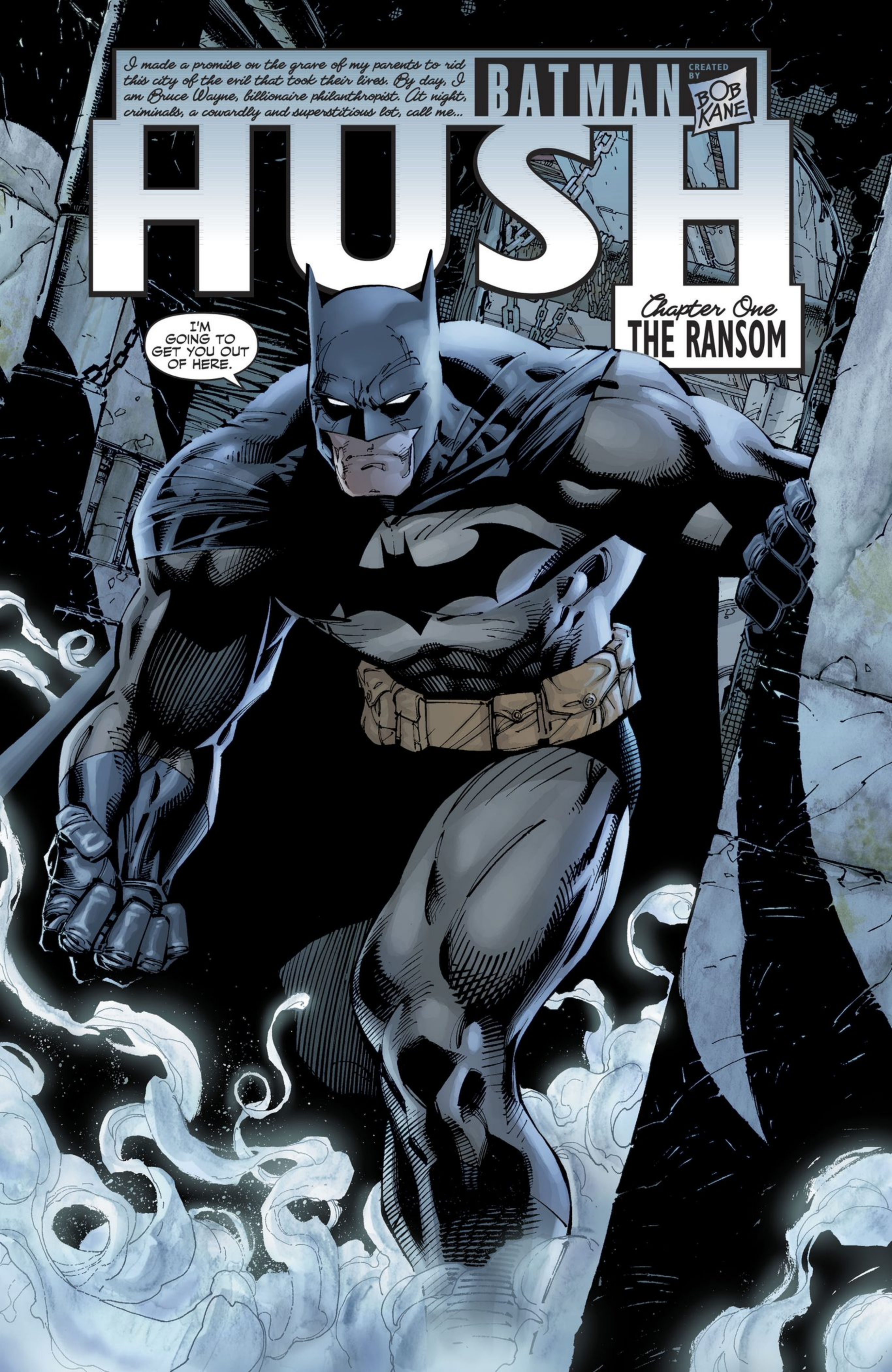
CREATED BY

BOB KANE

HUSH

Chapter One
THE RANSOM

I'M
GOING TO
GET YOU OUT
OF HERE.





Y-YOU'RE...
BATMAN...?

YES.

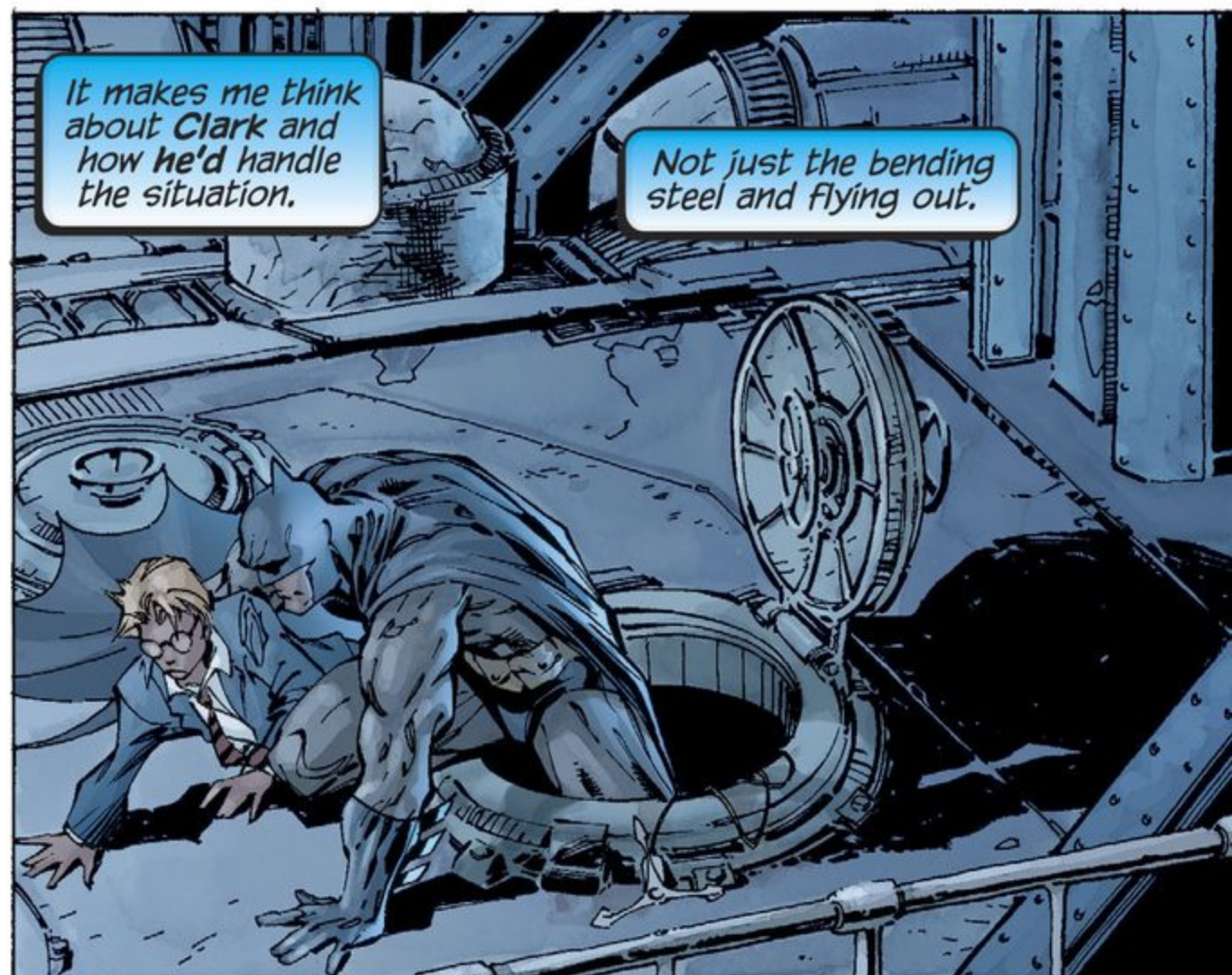


Thirty-seven
seconds left.



The boy is trembling.
Not that much older
than I was when...

He's probably just as
terrified of me as he is
of what's happening.



It makes me think
about Clark and
how he'd handle
the situation.

Not just the bending
steel and flying out.



Clark could smile. That Boy Scout
thing. And then say something
homespun to put the boy at ease.

But, the boy doesn't have Clark.
He has me.

In my city. Gotham City.

It is better that way.

L-LOOK
OUT --

None of this was the boy's fault. He didn't ask to be born Edward Lamont IV, heir to the Lamont chemical fortune.

Lamont Chemical being the LexCorp acquisition that created RC-60, a defoliate that makes napalm look like lipstick.

Edward was walking home from school two days ago when a large man in a raincoat snatched him off the streets and vanished.

The large man was **KILLER CROC**.

YOU SHOULD'N'T HAVE COME HERE.

THIS DOESN'T INVOLVE YOU.

SLASHH

The vanishing act involved the Gotham City sewer system.

Within six hours, a demand for ten million dollars was made. The Lamont family, the Mayor, The G.C.P.D. and even the F.B.I. all wanted to pay the ransom to get the boy back.

Everyone but me.



While Croc sent them all on a wild-goose chase, he picked up the money and I went after the hostage.

I NEED THAT MONEY.

WAM



I thought I had two minutes before Croc would get back and find the boy was missing.

BRAK



I was off by eleven seconds.

I'M GONNA EAT YOU ALIVE!

DUSCHK

This was planned. Timed. Well executed.
The real question is "Why?"

SLAK



BDOK

Kidnapping was
never Croc's M.O.

Too many variables.
Too many things
that could go wrong.

Bottom line. He's not that smart.



Someone else had
a hand in all this.

**W
T
OK**



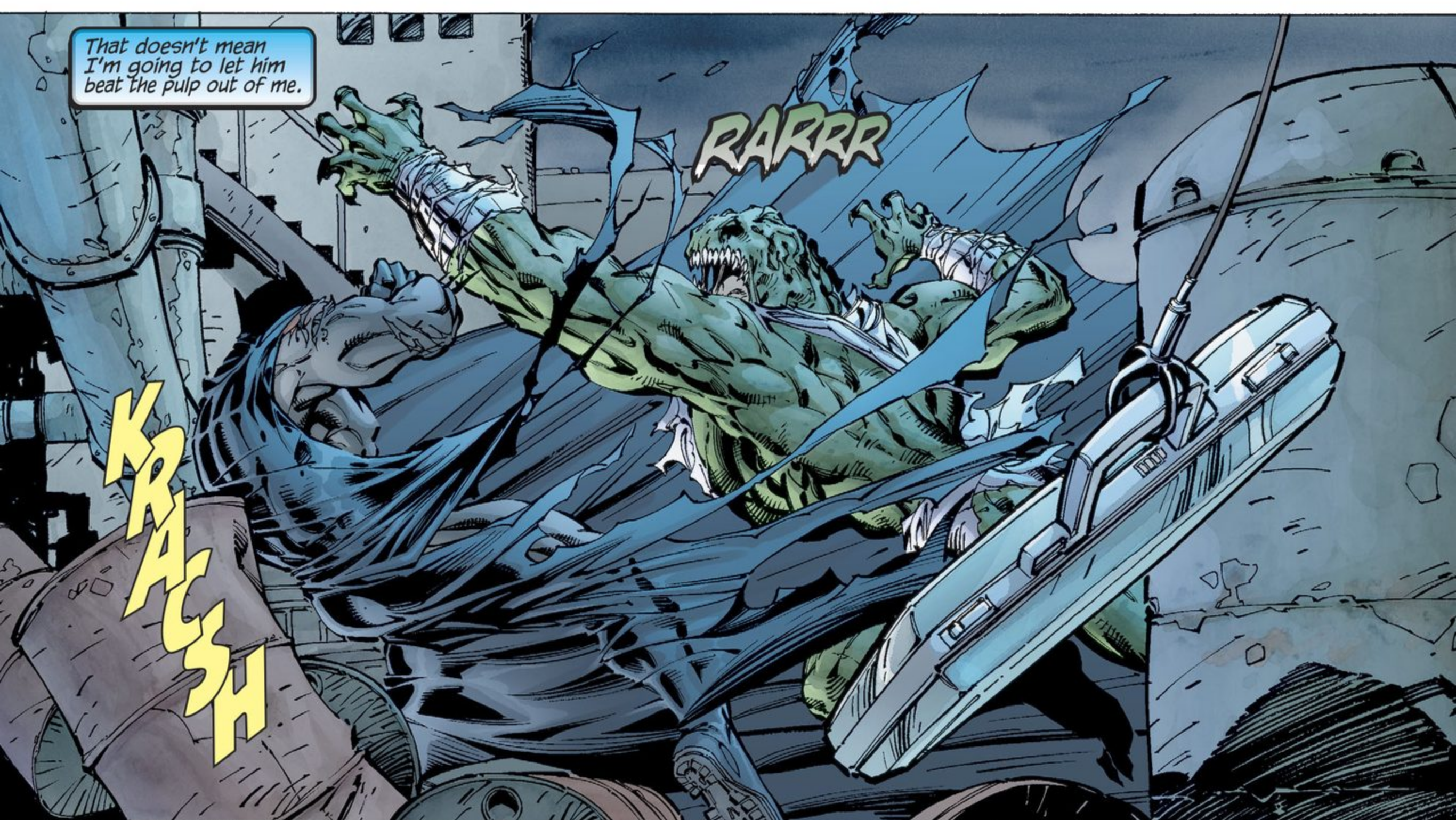
CRASH





YOUR
BONES WILL
SNAP.
YOUR
BLOOD WILL
FILL MY
BELLY.

More than just his
M.O. has changed.
His body -- maybe his
mind -- has mutated.
As if...he were more
savage than human.



That doesn't mean
I'm going to let him
beat the pulp out of me.

RARRR

KRASH



What Croc has in
strength and speed,
he lacks in other areas.

And a
vulnerability to
hypersonics.

FAP

YARRRRCXH!

SLAM

Ten thousand
bumblebees at
one thousand
decibels.

CHNK

CHNK

CHNK

He was willing
to kill me --
and the boy,
for certain --

SPRAK

-- What did
he need the
money for?



YEAH!

EDWARD.
BE QUIET.

I never was
a Boy Scout.



F.B.I.
STAY WHERE
YOU ARE!



NOT HOW *WE*
WOULD'VE HANDLED
IT --

THIS
IS MY CITY.

EASY, SON,
WE'RE GOING TO
TAKE YOU HOME
NOW.

-- LET ME FINISH.
BUT YOU GOT RESULTS.
THE BOY IS SAFE AND
THE MONEY --

...BUT...I WANT
TO STAY WITH BATMAN...



-- WHERE
THE HELL IS THE
MONEY?

Activating heat sensor.

DURING THE FIGHT...
SOMEONE
ELSE TOOK
IT.

THAT'S
IMPOSSIBLE.
NO ONE COULD'VE
GOTTEN THROUGH OUR
PERIMETER.

HEAT SIGNATURE
TARGET: HUMAN
SEX: FEMALE
APPROX. HEIGHT: 5' 7"
APPROX. WEIGHT: 115 lbs.

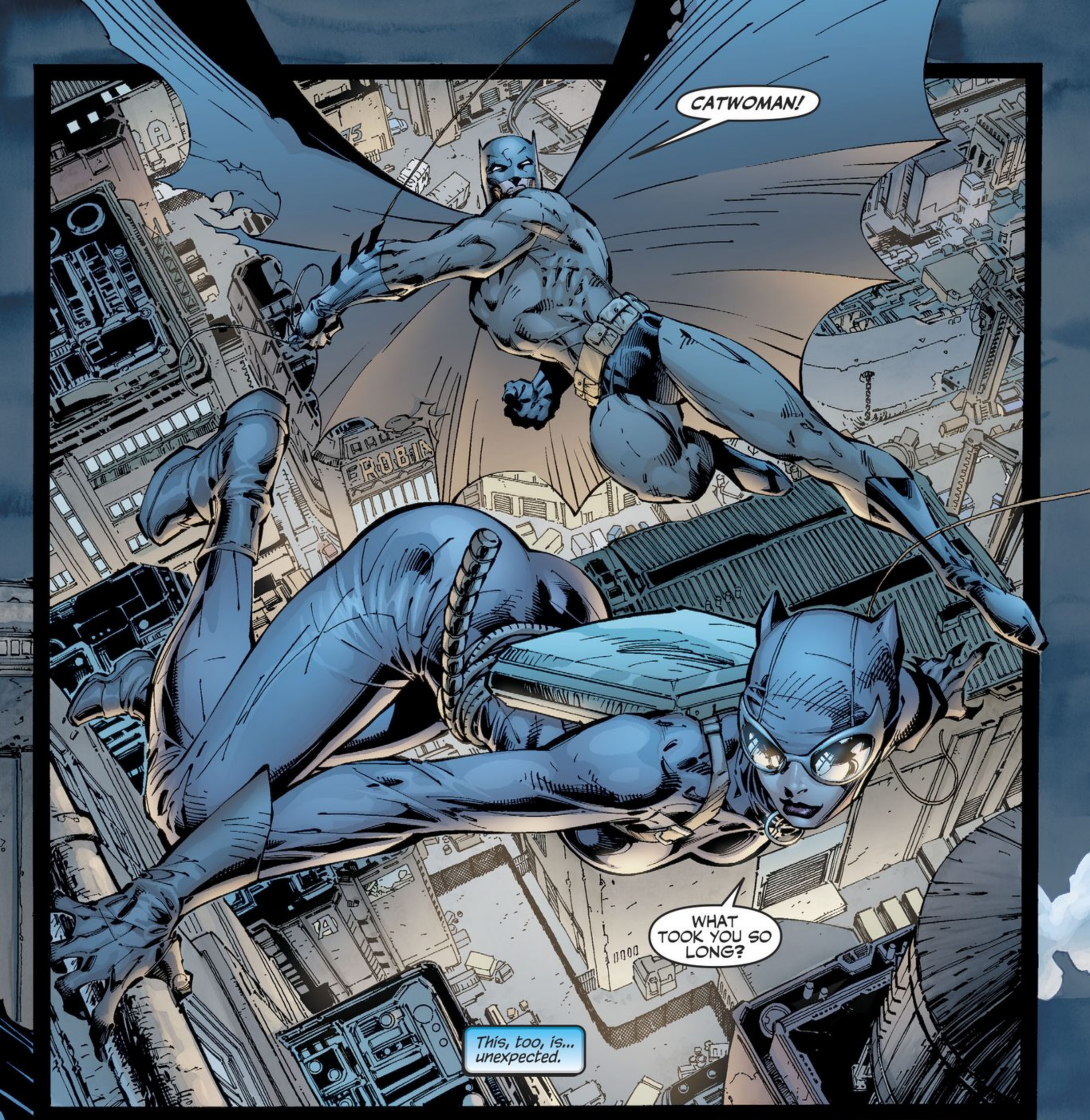
I DID.

PHLOOM

WHERE'S
HE GOING
NOW?

AND **SHE**
COULD HAVE
EASILY...

SHE...?!



CATWOMAN!

WHAT
TOOK YOU SO
LONG?

*This, too, is...
unexpected.*



YOU'RE BACK IN
GOTHAM CITY.

AND
YOU'RE...

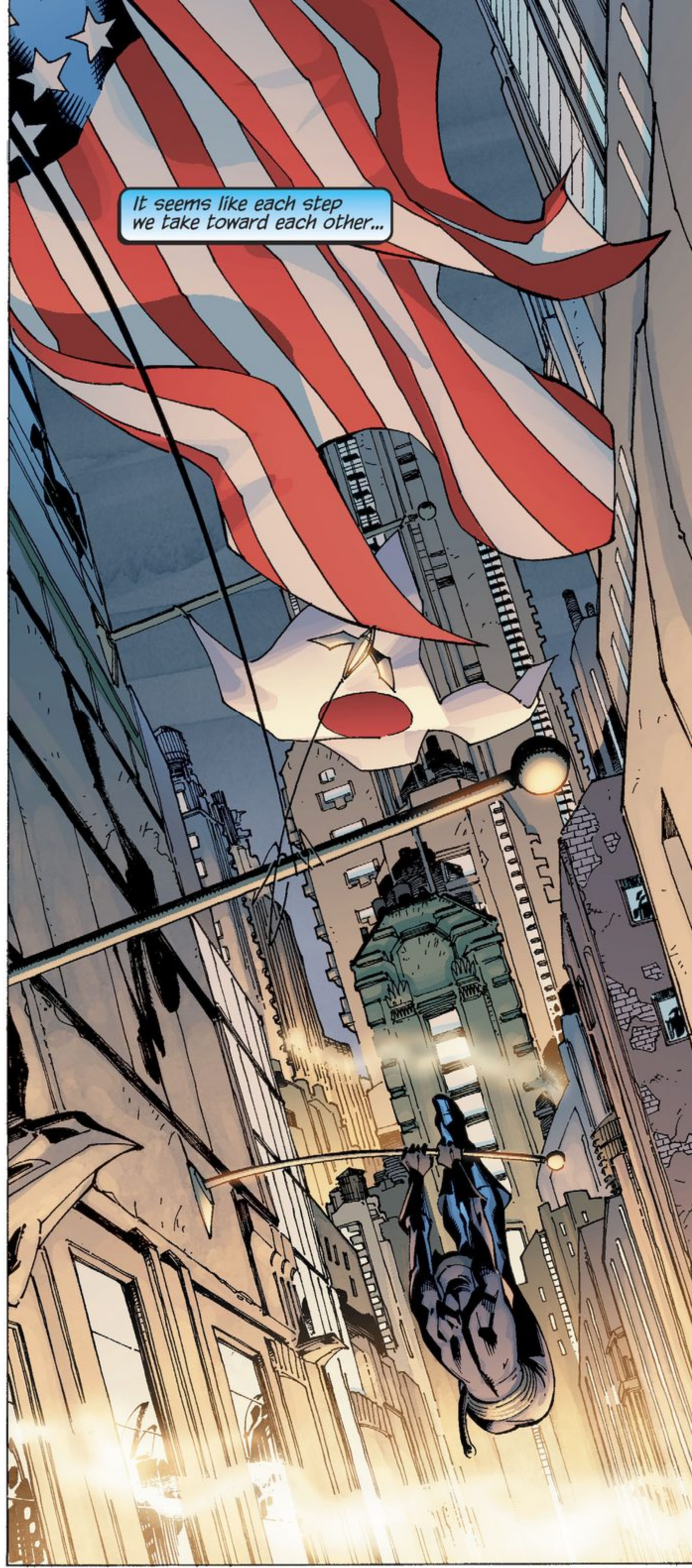
...AS
OBSERVANT...

...AS
EVER.

*Jewels. Museum pieces. Private homes.
But ripping off someone else's take --
just isn't her style.*



I have known
Catwoman...
Selina Kyle
for years.



It seems like each step
we take toward each other...



...we only get
further apart.



LIKE THE VIEW?

IT'S ABOUT THE ONLY THING YOU'RE GOING TO CATCH TONIGHT.



DON'T BE SO SURE.

Of late, she had been trying to make a go of it on the right side of the law.

For her to come out here -- on my ground -- there is something wrong about all of this.



VZAP



The batrope.
Something.
Someone.
Cut the line.

YOU WERE
SAYING...?

BATMAN...?

One chance.

My shoulder
breaks.

First, my body
betrays me.

WHOOOPH

ARGHK!

DRRRRBBB!

Then, my city
follows suit.





We have both
grown too old
together...

KRASH

WELL.

WELL.

WELL.

LOOK
WHAT
FELL INTO
HELL.

The Gotham Tower Apartments.
The City's finer side.

ANY
PROBLEMS?

BATMAN.

AND...?

HE...
COULDN'T
KEEP UP.

YOU SOUND
DISAPPOINTED...



WOULD THAT MATTER?

NOT REALLY.
AS LONG AS YOU HAVE THE MONEY.



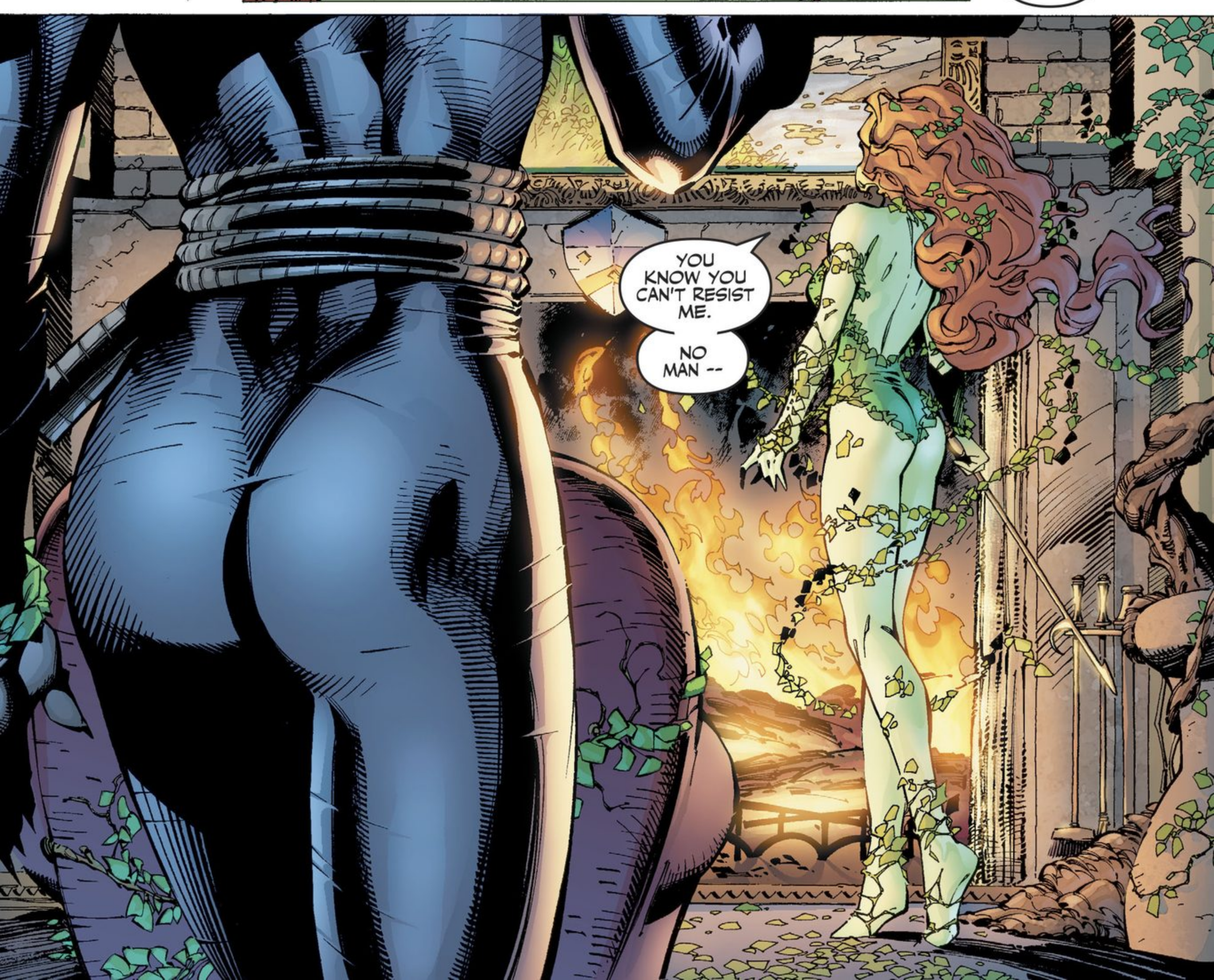
HOW WOULD YOU SAY IT...?

PURRRRRFECT.

NOW.

BRING ME THE MONEY...

THAT'S IT...



YOU KNOW YOU CAN'T RESIST ME.

NO MAN --

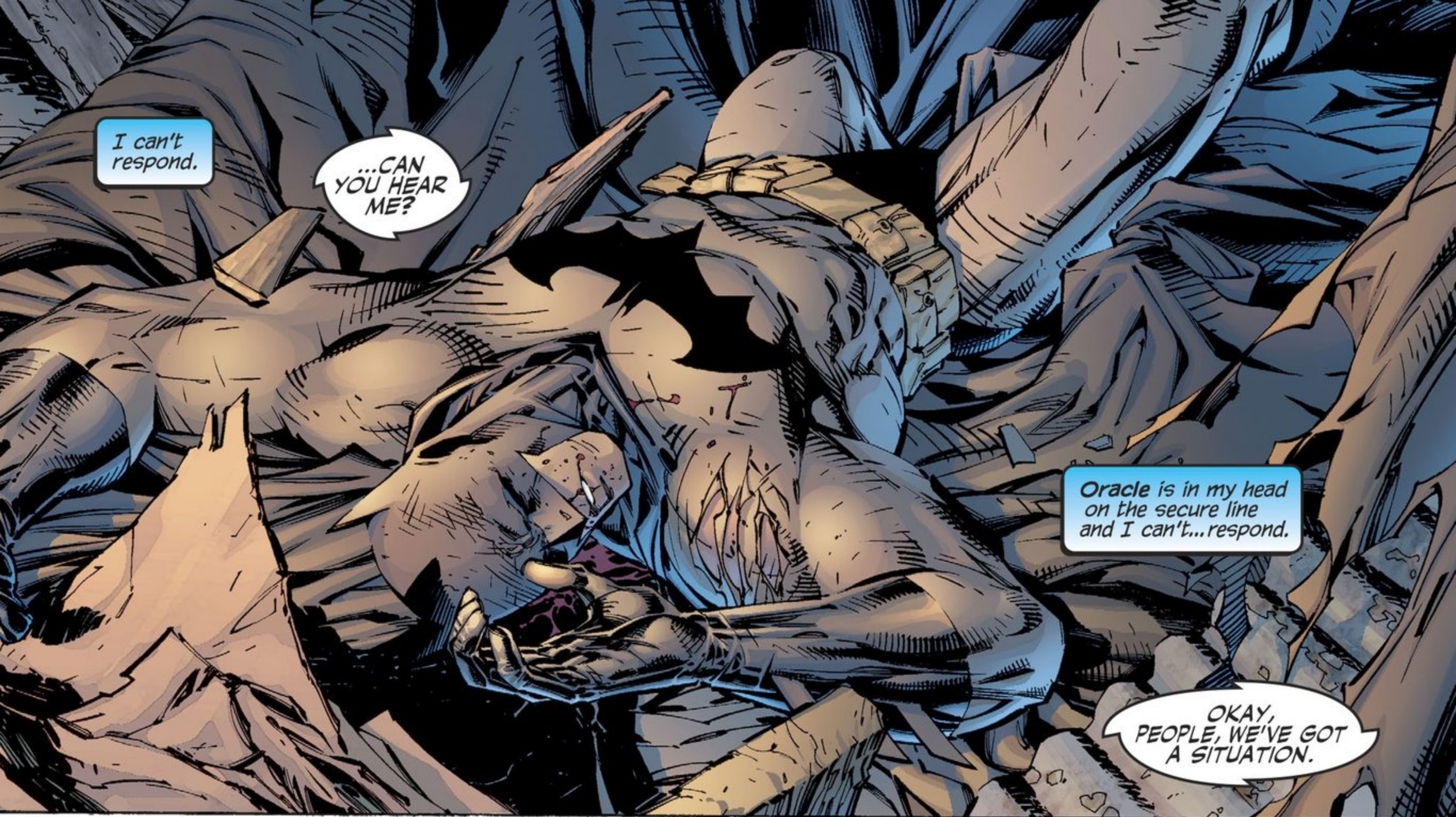


-- OR
WOMAN
CAN.





THE FRIEND



I can't respond.

...CAN YOU HEAR ME?

Oracle is in my head on the secure line and I can't...respond.

OKAY, PEOPLE, WE'VE GOT A SITUATION.



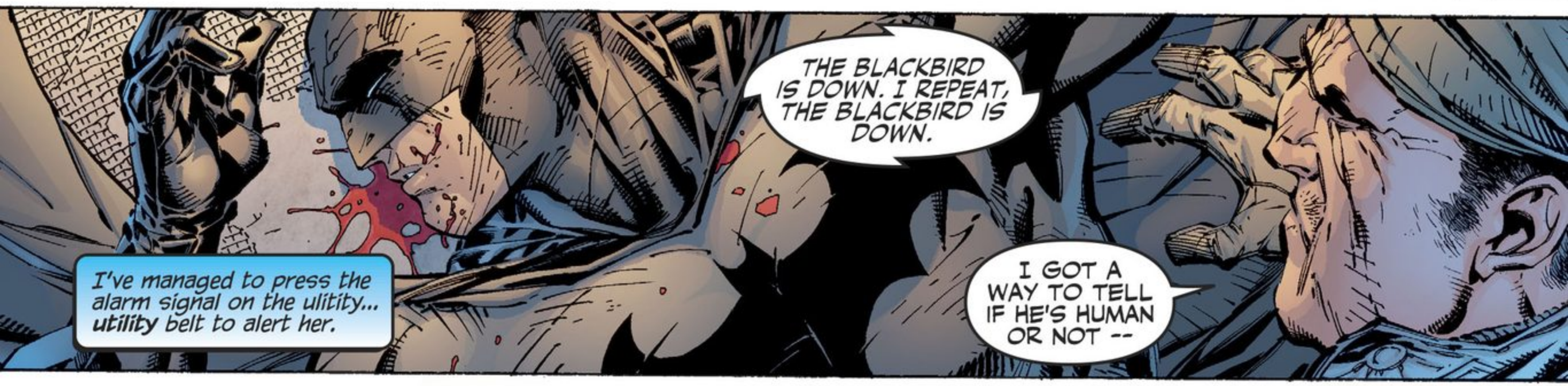
YOU THINK HE'S DEAD?

I SAW HIM FALL OUTTA THE SKY. LIKE ONE OF THEM PIGEONS WITH A BUSTED WING.

I HEAR HE AIN'T EVEN HUMAN.

WHAT'DYA MEAN "AIN'T HUMAN"? HE'S BLEEDIN'!

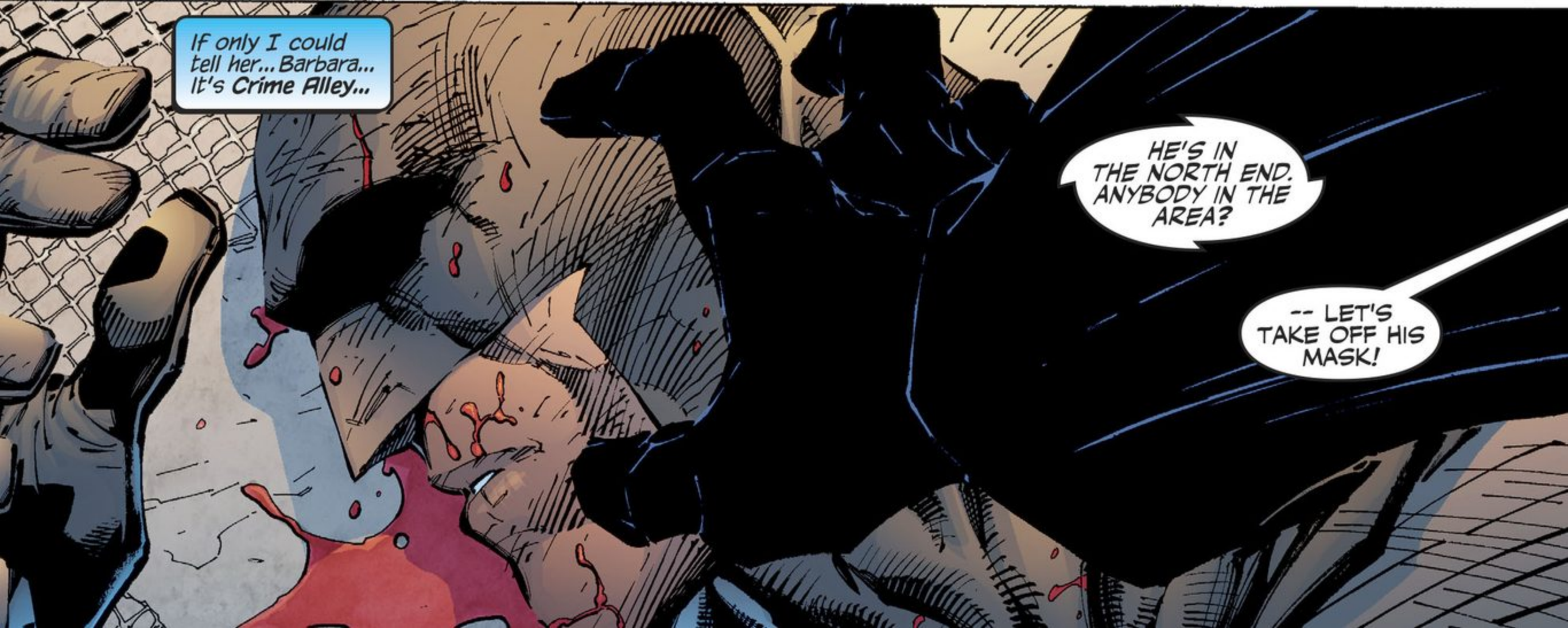
HOW DO YA KNOW IT'S HUMAN BLOOD?



THE BLACKBIRD IS DOWN. I REPEAT, THE BLACKBIRD IS DOWN.

I've managed to press the alarm signal on the utility... utility belt to alert her.

I GOT A WAY TO TELL IF HE'S HUMAN OR NOT --



If only I could tell her... Barbara... It's Crime Alley...

HE'S IN THE NORTH END. ANYBODY IN THE AREA?

-- LET'S TAKE OFF HIS MASK!





Chapter Two
THE FRIEND

STEP
AWAY WHILE
YOU STILL
CAN.

Huntress.







After all we've
been through...

... she still
fights for...
my life...

DAMN YOU...
NOT GOING
DOWN...

...NOT IN
FRONT OF
YOU...



GONNA TAKE THIS
POLE OF YOURS AND
BREAK YOU --



NO!

KRAK



So much rage.

Not sure I ever
saw it... before...

BAX



She's better than she knows...

I'LL TAKE
THAT BACK
NOW.



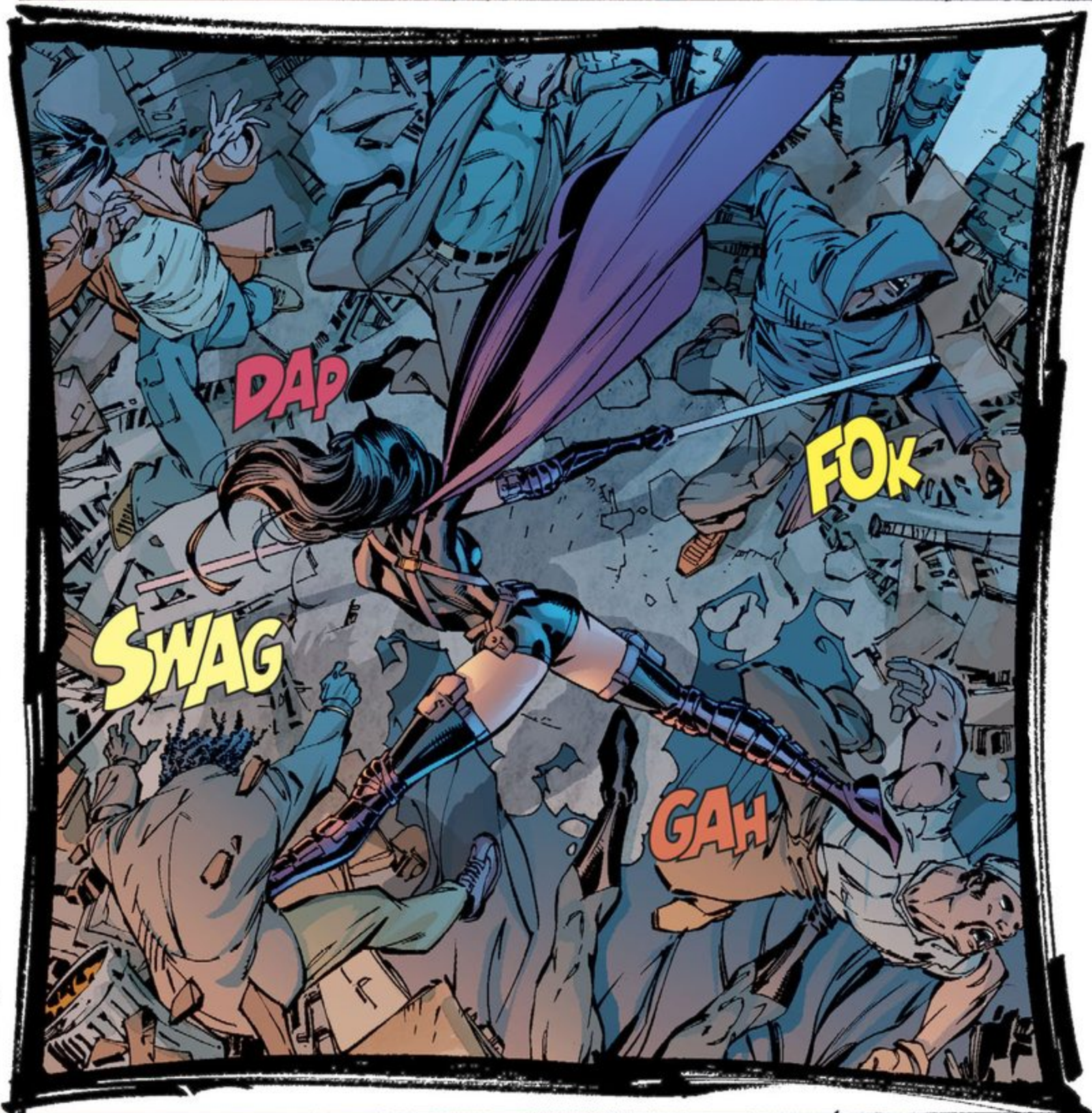
FAP

...but wastes
too much energy
proving it.



NOW.

BRING
IT ON.



DAP

SWAG

FOX

GAH



O. WE'RE
CLEAR. BUT
I'M NOT SURE
IF HE CAN
MOVE.

So much like
I was when I
started out...

RUM
RUMBLE

!



No wonder the others haven't accepted her...

...have to speak to Dick... about...

...about...

WHERE THE HELL DID YOU COME FROM?

SKRFEW
EECHH



H. I'VE SET THE CAR ON AUTO RELAY. IT SHOULD BE THERE ANY MIN--

NO KIDDING.

Car Door



HEY, UM...O. HE'S HURT PRETTY BAD.

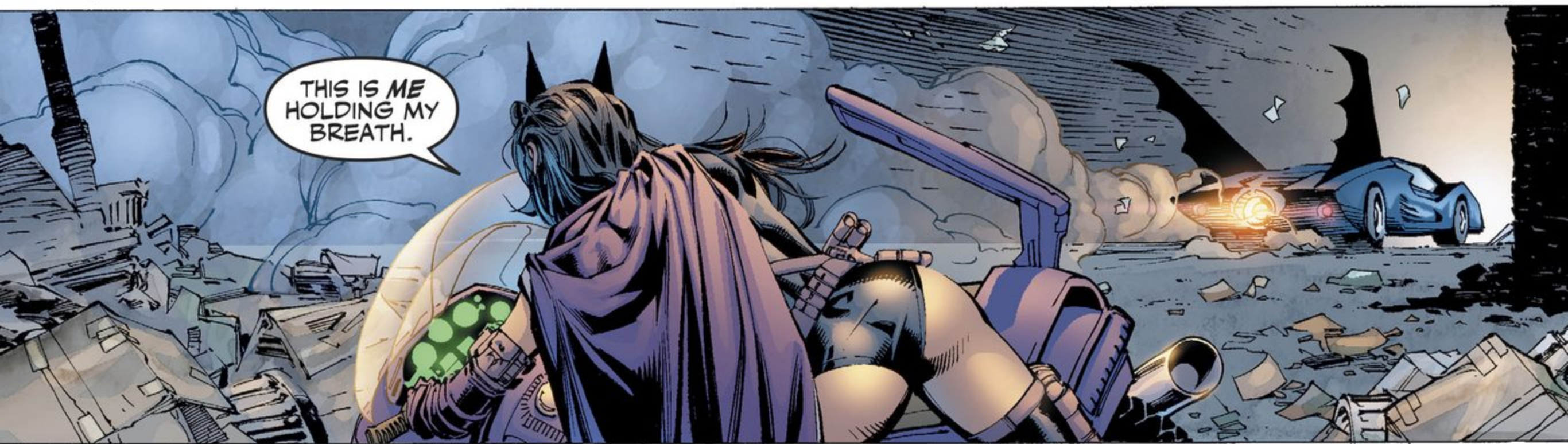
GET HIM IN THE CAR.



HE FEELS ALL... BROKEN.



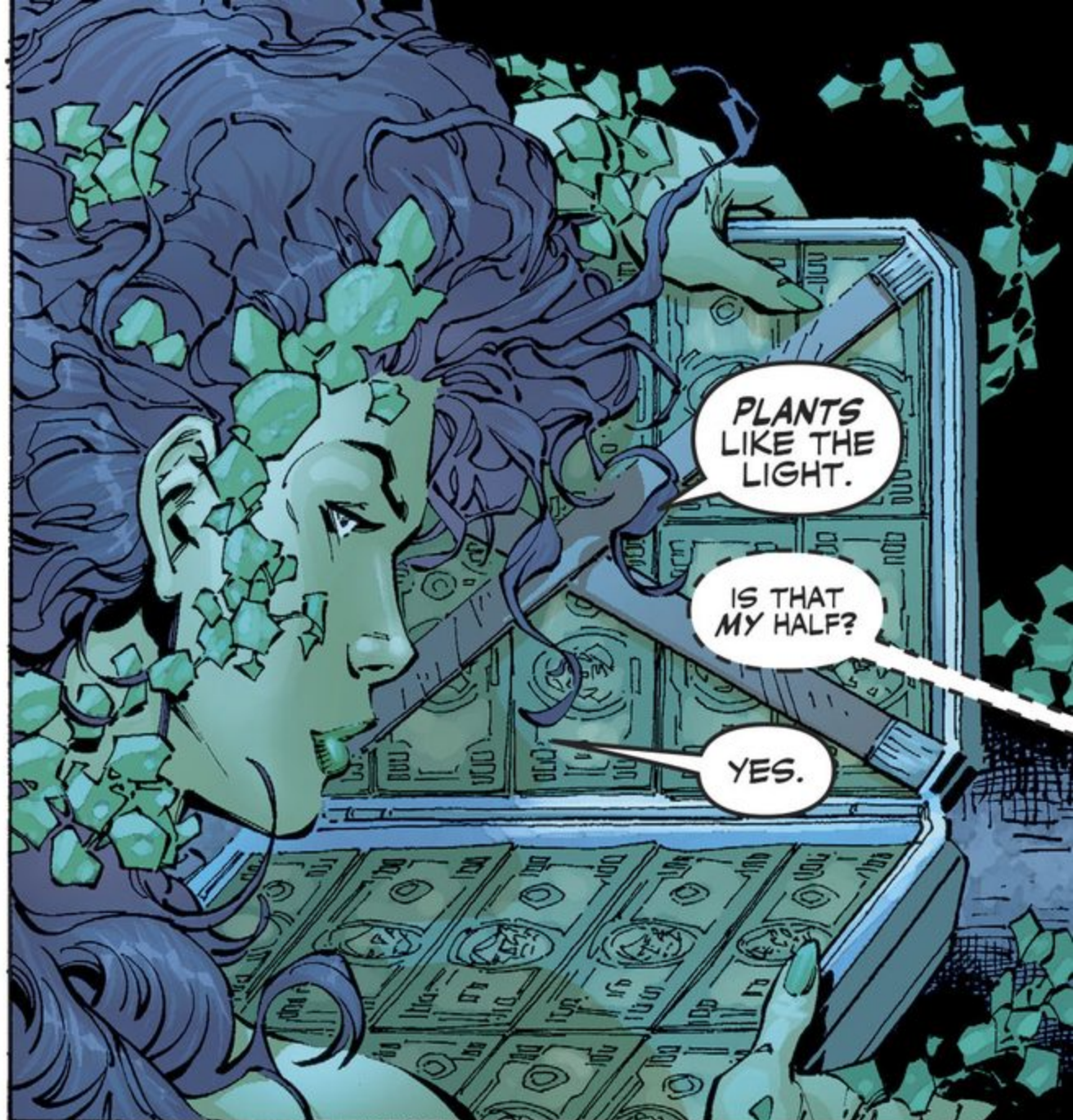
IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE I --





Later.

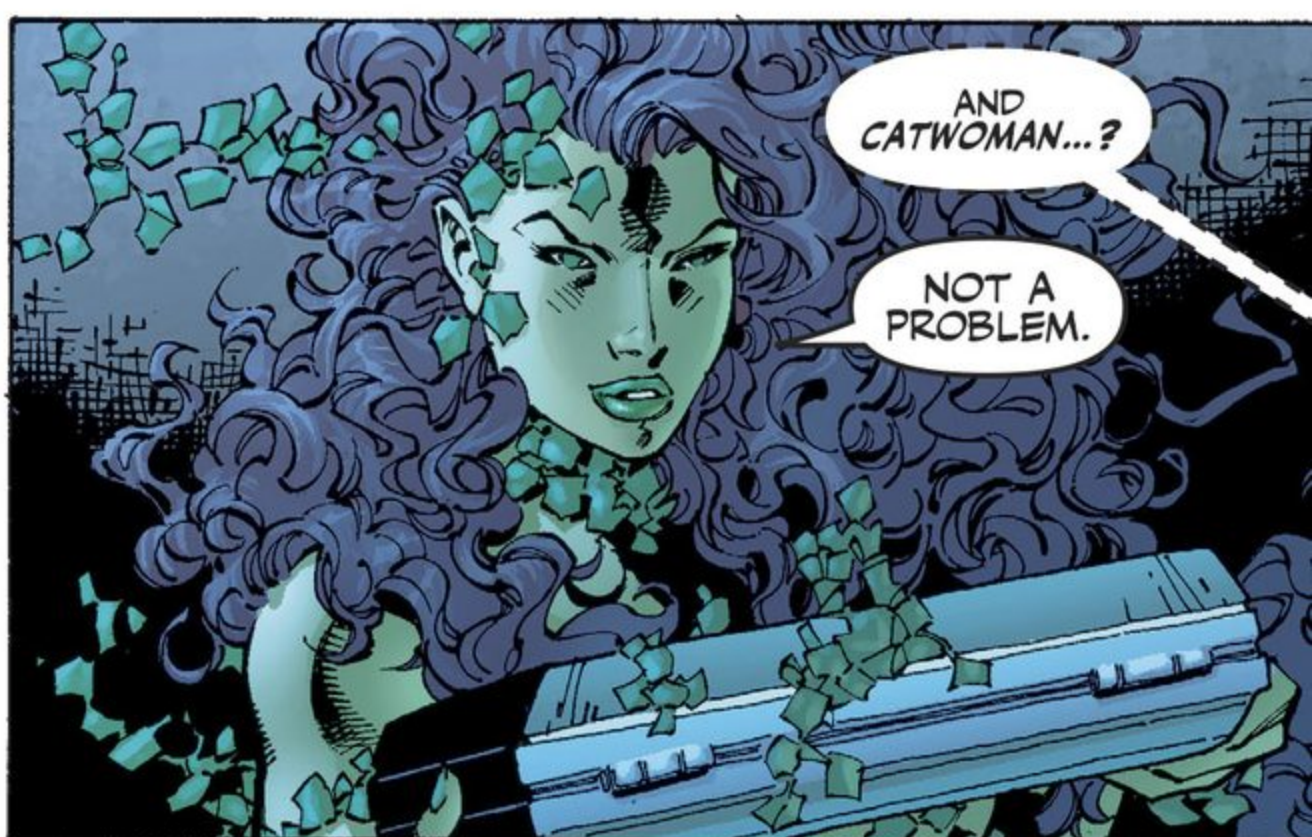
CAN WE
GET SOME
LIGHT IN
HERE?



PLANTS
LIKE THE
LIGHT.

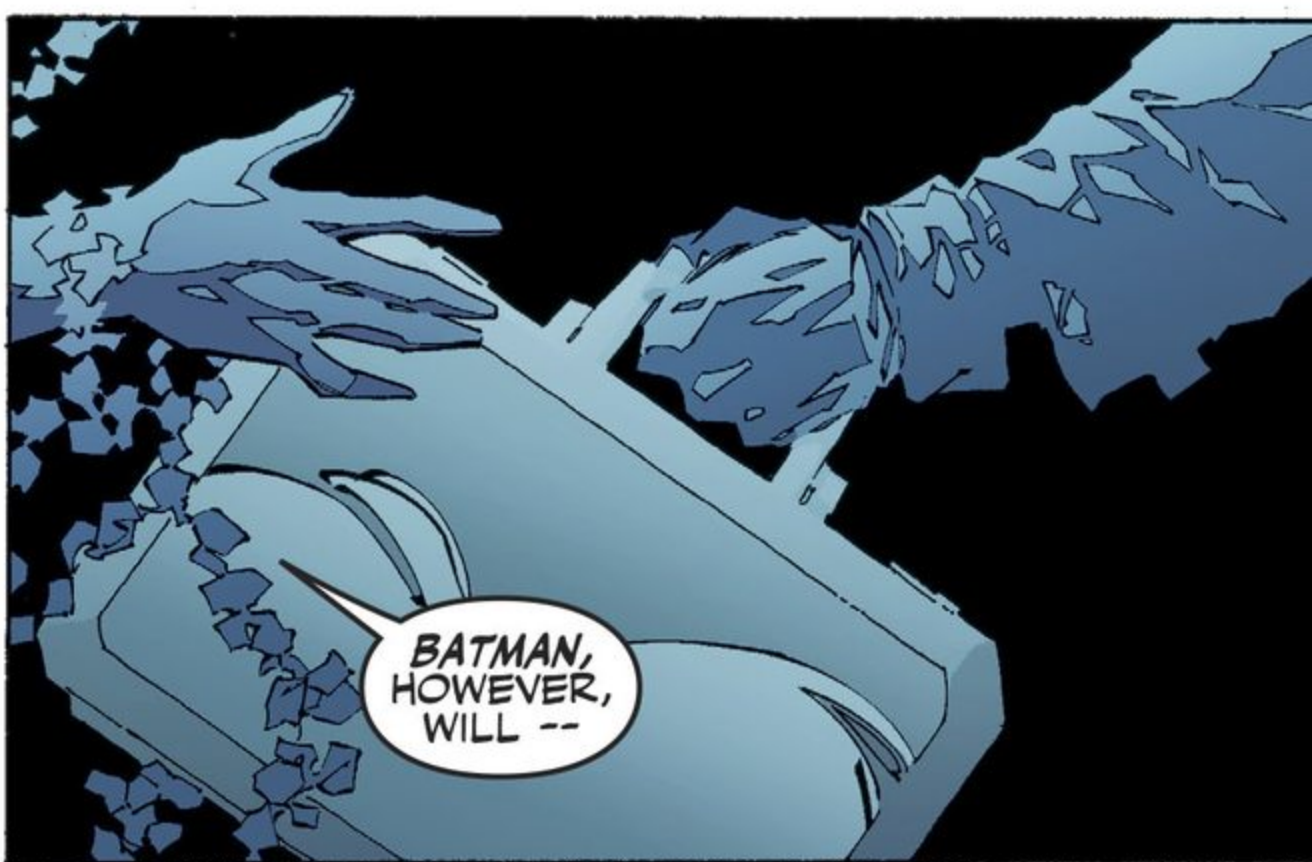
IS THAT
MY HALF?

YES.

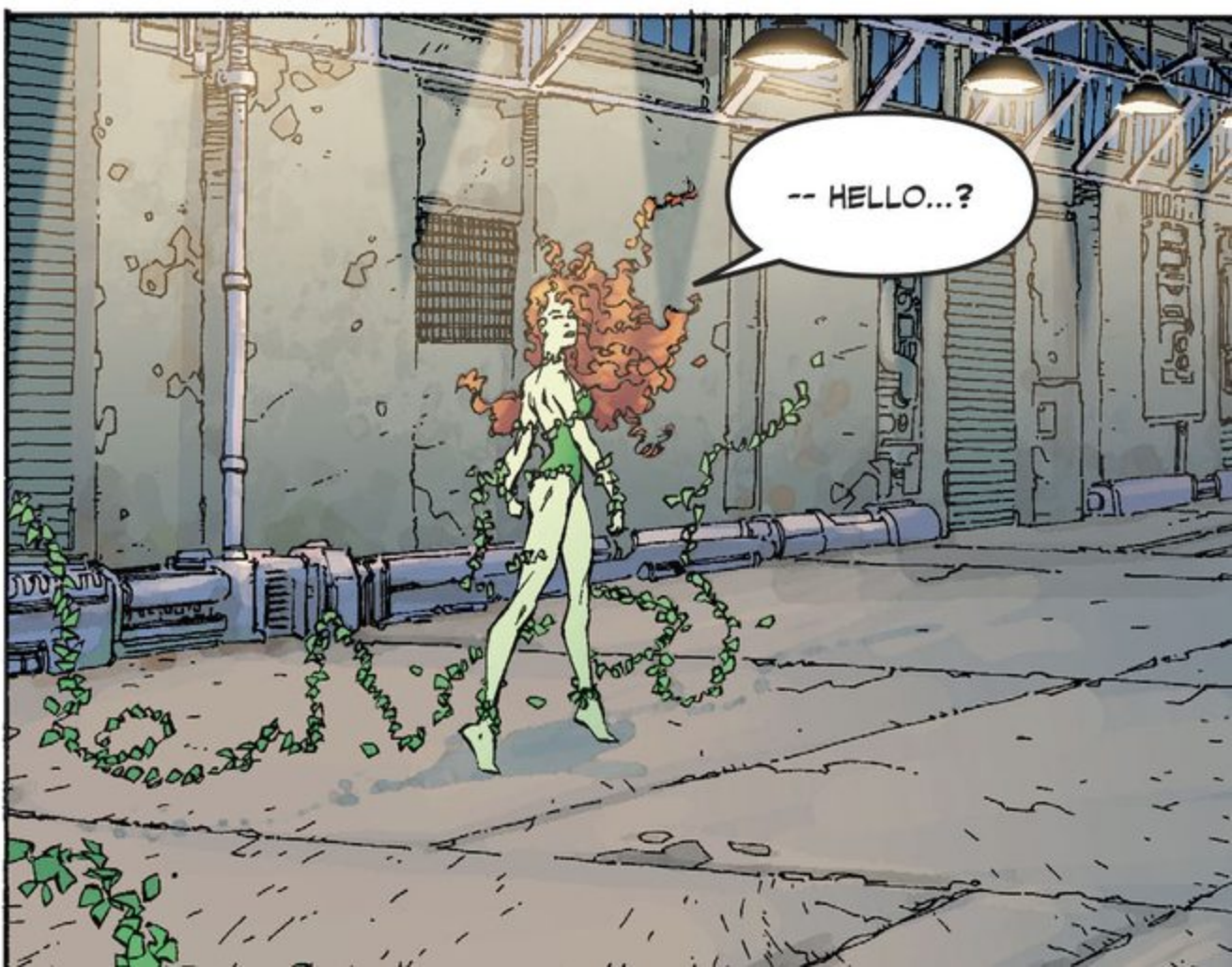


AND
CATWOMAN...?

NOT A
PROBLEM.



BATMAN,
HOWEVER,
WILL --



-- HELLO...?

Somehow... I am back in the cave. I can hear Alfred. The bandages are cold.

I'M AFRAID...

I'M AFRAID, MASTER BRUCE, THAT IF YOU CAN HEAR ME... THERE IS FAR TOO MUCH DAMAGE FOR MY PARTICULAR SKILLS.

YOUR SKULL IS FRACTURED AND --

ALFRED, I'VE CONTACTED SHONDRA KINSOLVING. HER EXPERIENCE WITH MENDING BRUCE'S BACK MAY PROVE BENEFICIAL.

BEGGING YOUR PARDON, MISS. BUT, I BELIEVE DOCTOR KINSOLVING IS NOT QUITE RIGHT IN THE HEAD.

SHE GOT BETTER.

RIGHT. VERY GOOD, THEN. WE'LL HAVE TO MAKE THE NECESSARY ARRANGEMENTS TO EXPLAIN MASTER BRUCE'S CONDITION --

I CAN HAVE DICK WRECK THE PORSCHE. THE REST IS UP TO YOU --

ACTUALLY, NO.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?!

IT IS, AS ALWAYS...

...HIS FIGHT TO WIN...



HOLD ON. I'M GETTING
SOME SORT OF INVOLUNTARY
NERVE RESPONSE FROM
HIS LEFT HAND.

TAP
TAP
TAP TAP TAP

NO. I'M
MISTAKEN.

"THOMAS...ELLIOT."
YES. GOOD SHOW, SIR.
SPLENDID IDEA.

ALFRED, WHO IS
"THOMAS ELLIOT"?

SOMEONE
WHOSE NAME I
HAVE NOT HEARD
IN A VERY LONG
TIME...

OR...PERHAPS NOT
INVOLUNTARY.

TAP
TAP
TAP TAP TAP

ALFRED...
IS THAT...?

MORSE
CODE. YES...
YES, I BELIEVE
IT IS.

TAP
TAP
TAP TAP TAP

THOMAS...?

OH, DEAR, HE'S
DELIRIOUS --
RECOLLECTING HIS
OWN FATHER.

TAP TAP
TAP-TAP-TAP-TAP

Alfred... if I
could smile...

Gotham Gazette Thursday, November 20
Morning Edition
Cloudy, chance of rain
**PLAYBOY WAYNE IN
NEAR FATAL WRECK**



-- WAYNE WAS RUSHED TO GOTHAM CITY HOSPITAL WHERE, IRONICALLY, HIS OWN FATHER HELD RESIDENCY --



-- IT IS UNKNOWN AT THIS TIME IF THE MILLIONAIRE WAS WEARING A SEAT BELT OR WHAT, IF ANY, HIS BLOOD ALCOHOL COUNT WAS --



FILE



-- DOCTOR THOMAS ELLIOT, THE RENOWNED SURGEON, IS BEING FLOWN IN FROM PHILADELPHIA --



-- MUST BE NICE TO HAVE FRIENDS IN HIGH PLACES.

AND WHEN WE'RE DEALING WITH BRUCE WAYNE, FEW COME HIGHER.



In the fog of anesthesia, I remember one particular *Halloween*.

My father had promised to take me trick-or-treating and, as usual, was held up at the hospital.

IN A RELATED STORY, SHARES OF WAYNE TECH TUMBLED TODAY IN REACTION TO THE ACCIDENT...



HIS PULSE IS
DROPPING.

DOES ANYONE
KNOW WHERE
DOCTOR ELLIOT
IS?

My mother, always well-meaning,
suggested I call a classmate and
go out with one of them instead.

Angry, I told her
I had no friends
at school.



WHY DOES
EVERYONE LOOK
SO SERIOUS?

THIS IS JUST
BRAIN SURGERY,
FOLKS.

I'LL HAVE
US BACK OUT ON
THE GOLF COURSE
BEFORE LUNCH.

BOOM



BRUCE.
IF YOU WANTED
TO GET TOGETHER
AFTER ALL THIS
TIME --

-- YOU
DIDN'T *HAVE*
TO TRY TO KILL
YOURSELF TO
DO IT.

I lied to my mother.

There was always
Tommy Elliot...



YOU SURE
YOU WANT TO
DO THAT?



I KNOW WHAT
YOU'RE DOING, TOMMY.
YOU WANT TO MAKE
ME SECOND-GUESS
MY MOVE.

ACTUALLY,
I'M OFFERING
TO SAVE YOUR
LIFE.



JUST
TRY AND
KILL ME.



BRUCE.
YOU'RE ALREADY
DEAD.



HOW CAN
YOU TELL?
YOU HAVEN'T
EVEN MOVED
YET.



IT WON'T
HAPPEN ON THE
NEXT MOVE.
IT IS *SIX* MOVES
FROM NOW.



YOU
FORGOT YOUR
MOST IMPORTANT
PIECE, BRUCE.

I'VE GOT
MY *GENERAL*
GUARDED.

NOT
YOUR GENERAL.
YOUR *SPY*.





C'MON --
LET'S PLAY
AGAIN!

DON'T YOU THINK
IT'S WONDERFUL HOW
THEY NEVER *REALLY*
ARGUE?



IT'S
LIKE THEY'RE
BROTHERS.

ALL THE
BROTHERS I'VE
KNOWN *ARGUE*
ALL THE TIME,
MARTHA.

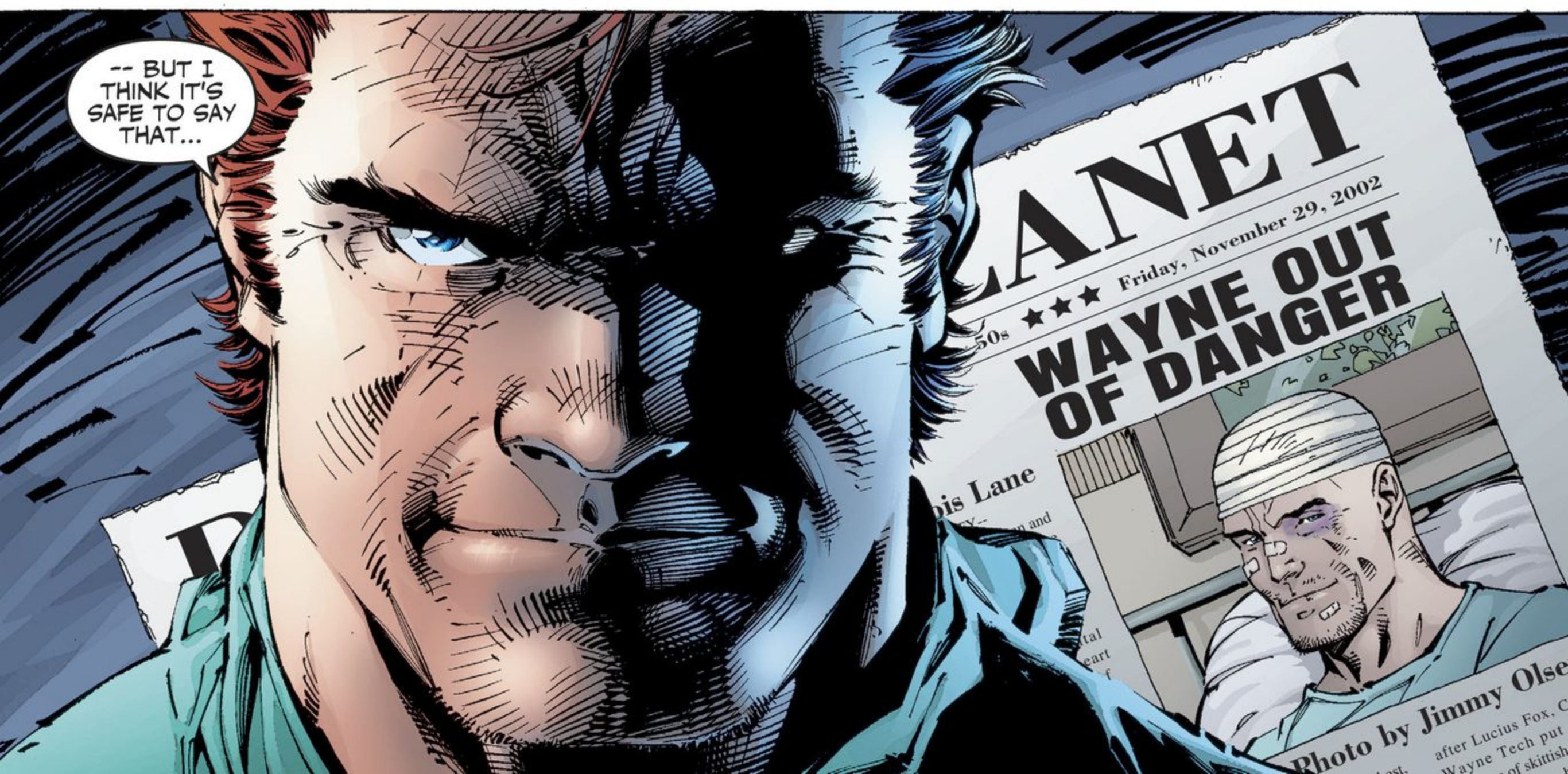
YOU *KNOW*
WHAT I MEAN,
THOMAS.



ACTUALLY,
THIS IS ONE OF
THOSE FEW TIMES
THAT I DO.

BARRING SOME
SORT OF UNFORESEEN
DISASTER, I THINK OUR
SON HAS *FINALLY* FOUND
A BEST FRIEND.

THE KIND
YOU KNOW YOUR
ENTIRE LIFE...





I barely survived the fall.



Had it not been for Alfred.



Had it not been for Oracle.



Had it not been... that someone cut the batrope...

"...THAT WE MAY LIVE IN PEACE."



T H E B E A S T



His name is
Killer Croc.

GO TO
HELL.



He is being held here
in Arkham Asylum
for "observation."

WHAT DID
YOU WANT THE
TEN MILLION
FOR?



Something has
happened to him.
He is mutating...
losing even more
of his humanity.

LET
ME OUT AND
I'LL SHOW
YOU.



WE'RE
DONE.

DON'T
TURN YOUR
BACK ON
ME.

Soon, whatever knowledge he has
of the crime will be lost within
the corridors of his mind.





TCHHHHHHSH

HE'S LOOSE!

I'LL KILL ALL OF YOU!

SKRAK

NNGNNN!

I need to know who orchestrated the kidnapping...

NO.

YOU WON'T HURT ANYONE ELSE.

BROK

...taught my enemy new methods...

SLAM

TOO SLOW.

...and what happened to the money.

A full-page comic book illustration. A massive T-Rex, colored in shades of red and pink, dominates the upper half of the frame, roaring with its mouth wide open, showing sharp teeth. Below the dinosaur, Batman lies on his back on a dark, rocky surface. He is wearing his iconic blue and grey suit with a yellow utility belt. His eyes are closed, and his expression is one of defeat. The background consists of a dark, textured wall. In the top left corner, there is a yellow box with the chapter title. In the middle left, a blue box contains a narrative line. A speech bubble from the T-Rex is positioned near its head.

Chapter Three
THE BEAST

*Leaving me
to send a monster
to catch a monster.*

GET
BACK OR
I'LL GUT
HIM!





THAT'S ALL RIGHT. I'M NOT HERE TO BE LIKED.

I DON'T NEED TO REMIND YOU THAT THE **FATHER** OF THE **BOY** THAT... **BEAST**...KIDNAPPED IS A **PERSONAL** FRIEND OF THE PRESIDENT.

Amanda Waller heads up President Luthor's Office of Meta-Human Affairs.

I have history with Waller. None of it pleasant.

That's all right. I'm not here to be liked either.



Dealing with anything remotely connected to Luthor makes my skin crawl. But, Croc was about to be transferred out of my city...

YOU MEAN HE'S A **MAJOR CONTRIBUTOR** TO **LUTHOR'S** CAMPAIGN PARTY.

YOU'VE GOT UNTIL **MIDNIGHT**.

THEN, **CROC** IS **OURS**.



KRAKA

MASTER **BRUCE**...?

GO AHEAD, **ALFRED**.

A CAR JUST PULLED UP TO THE HOUSE. ARE WE EXPECTING COMPANY?

NO.

PHILADELPHIA LICENSE PLATE. **HMX 19**...I CAN'T MAKE OUT THE LAST NUMBER IN THIS STORM.

I have until midnight...

Wayne Manor.
What was once
my father's house
is now mine.

Along with all
the memories
that it holds.

ORACLE?

I'M HERE. EVEN OFF
A PARTIAL PLATE, PHILADELPHIA
D.M.V. SHOWS THE OWNER TO BE
DR. THOMAS ELLIOT.

THAT'S...
UNEXPECTED.



YOU SURE
I CAN'T ENTICE YOU
TO COME HOME, SIR?
AFTER ALL, DR. ELLIOT
ONLY SAVED YOUR
LIFE.

I WOULD
IF I COULD,
ALFRED.

I BELIEVE
THAT'S "I COULD
IF I WOULD,"
IN YOUR CASE,
SIR.

BING
BONG

JUST
MAKE
THE USUAL
EXCUSE,
PLEASE.

CONSIDER
IT DONE, SIR.

GOOD EVEN--
TOMMY...?

HELLO,
ALF.



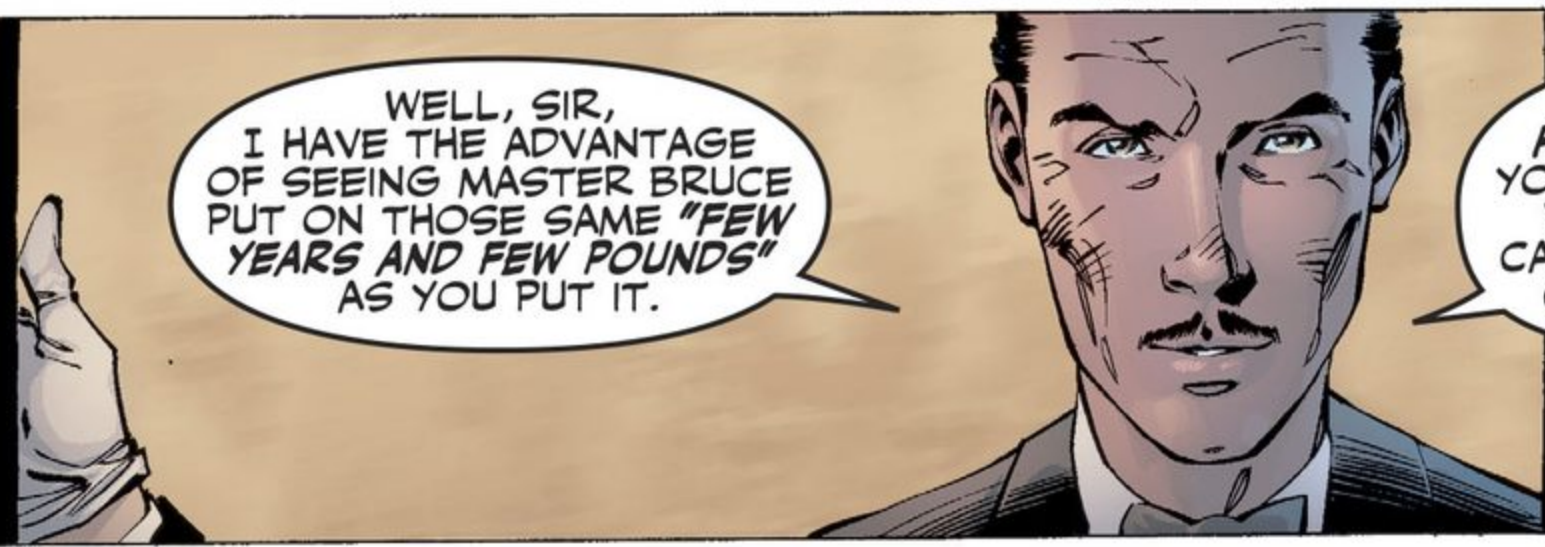
I...I APOLOGIZE, SIR,
FOR THE INFORMALITY. YOU ARE
"DOCTOR THOMAS ELLIOT"
THESE DAYS, AREN'T YOU?





NO
NEED TO
APOLOGIZE,
ALF.

I'M DELIGHTED
THAT DESPITE A FEW
YEARS AND A FEW
POUNDS YOU STILL
RECOGNIZE ME.



WELL, SIR,
I HAVE THE ADVANTAGE
OF SEEING MASTER BRUCE
PUT ON THOSE SAME "FEW
YEARS AND FEW POUNDS"
AS YOU PUT IT.

I...UM...
HAD FORGOTTEN
YOUR...DELIGHTFUL
PENCHANT FOR
CALLING ME "ALF,"
ODDLY ENOUGH.



GLAD TO SEE
YOU'VE KEPT
THAT DRY SENSE
OF HUMOR.

SPEAKING OF "DRY"...
AREN'T YOU GOING TO
INVITE ME IN? I'D LIKE
TO CHECK UP ON MY
PATIENT.

OF
COURSE,
ONLY...

...MASTER BRUCE
ISN'T AT HOME RIGHT
NOW.



NOTHING
SERIOUS,
I HOPE.

QUITE
THE OPPOSITE,
I'M AFRAID.

"GOING
OFF IN SEARCH
OF A LADY,"
I BELIEVE HE
SAID.

OH.



ALF. AS HIS
SURGEON
AND AN OLD
FRIEND --

-- TELL
HIM SOMETHING
FOR ME?

THIS IS A
DANGEROUS
GAME HE IS
PLAYING.

SIR...?

THIS GOING OUT
AND ABOUT WHEN HE
SHOULD BE IN BED.
ALONE.

DANGEROUS.





Gotham City Hospital.
My father was Head of
Trauma Surgery back then.

Hospitals are awful
places at night.

Especially
for children...

MY DAD IS
IN THERE, TOMMY.
NOTHING BAD
IS GOING TO
HAPPEN.



I *TRIED* TO WARN
MISTER ELLIOT.

NIGHT LIKE
THIS, THE ROADS
GET SLIPPERY.

I SHOULD HAVE
BEEN DRIVING THEM --
BUT HE *INSISTED* ON
GOING OUT ALONE WITH
THE MISSUS.

YOU
MUSTN'T BLAME
YOURSELF, *CLARENCE*.
ACCIDENTS WILL
HAPPEN.

AND GIVEN
THE SITUATION,
THEY COULD NOT
BE IN BETTER
HANDS.



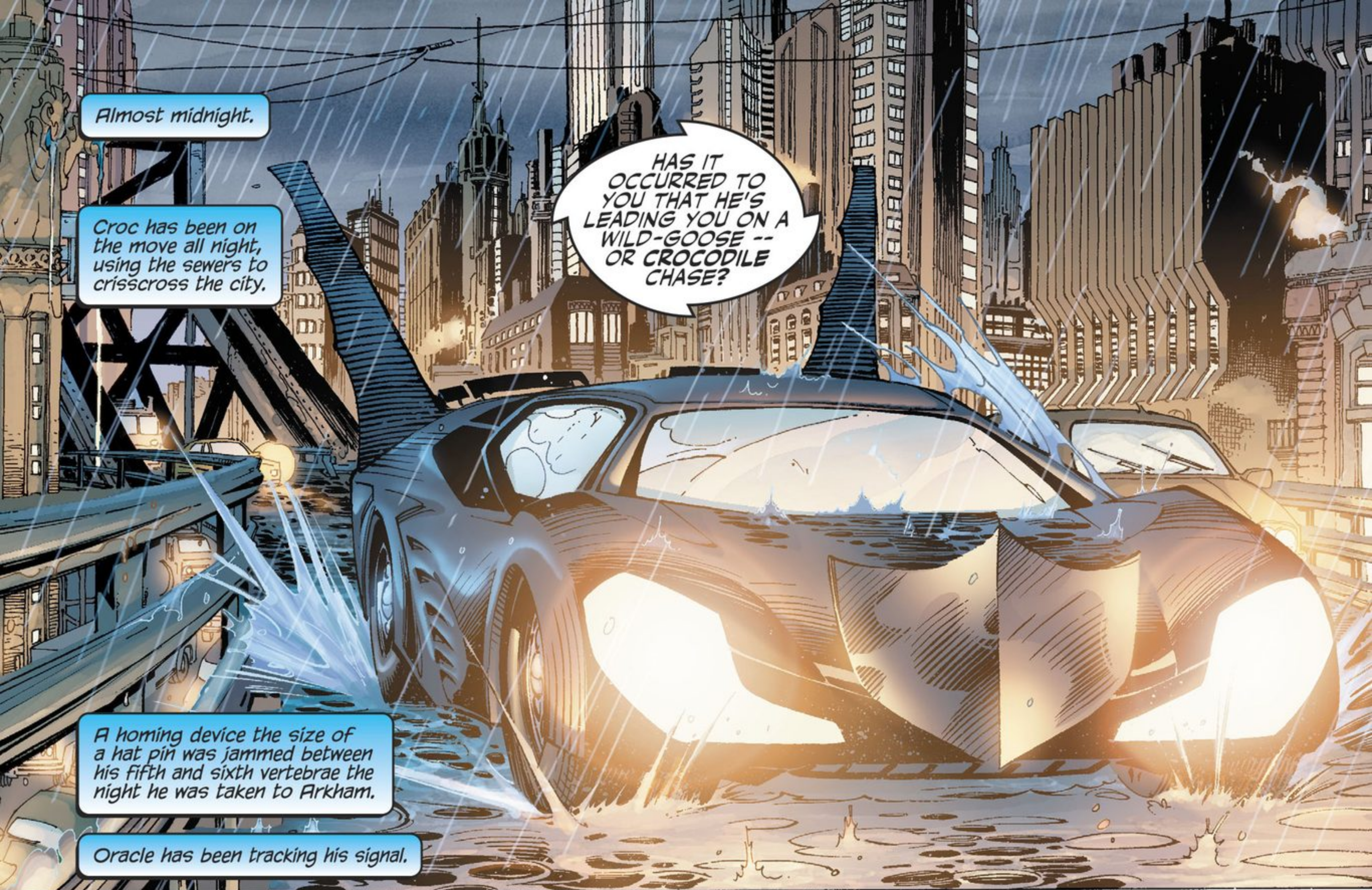
YOU
SWEAR...?

STICK A
NEEDLE IN
MY EYE.



THANKS,
BRUCE...





Almost midnight.

Croc has been on the move all night, using the sewers to crisscross the city.

HAS IT OCCURRED TO YOU THAT HE'S LEADING YOU ON A WILD-GOOSE -- OR CROCODILE CHASE?

A homing device the size of a hat pin was jammed between his fifth and sixth vertebrae the night he was taken to Arkham.

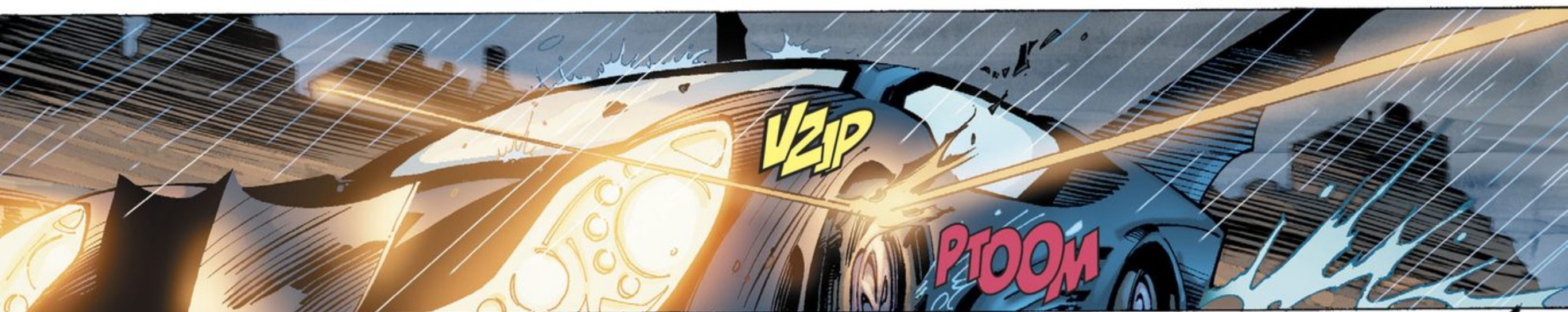
Oracle has been tracking his signal.



HE WANTS THAT MONEY, ORACLE.

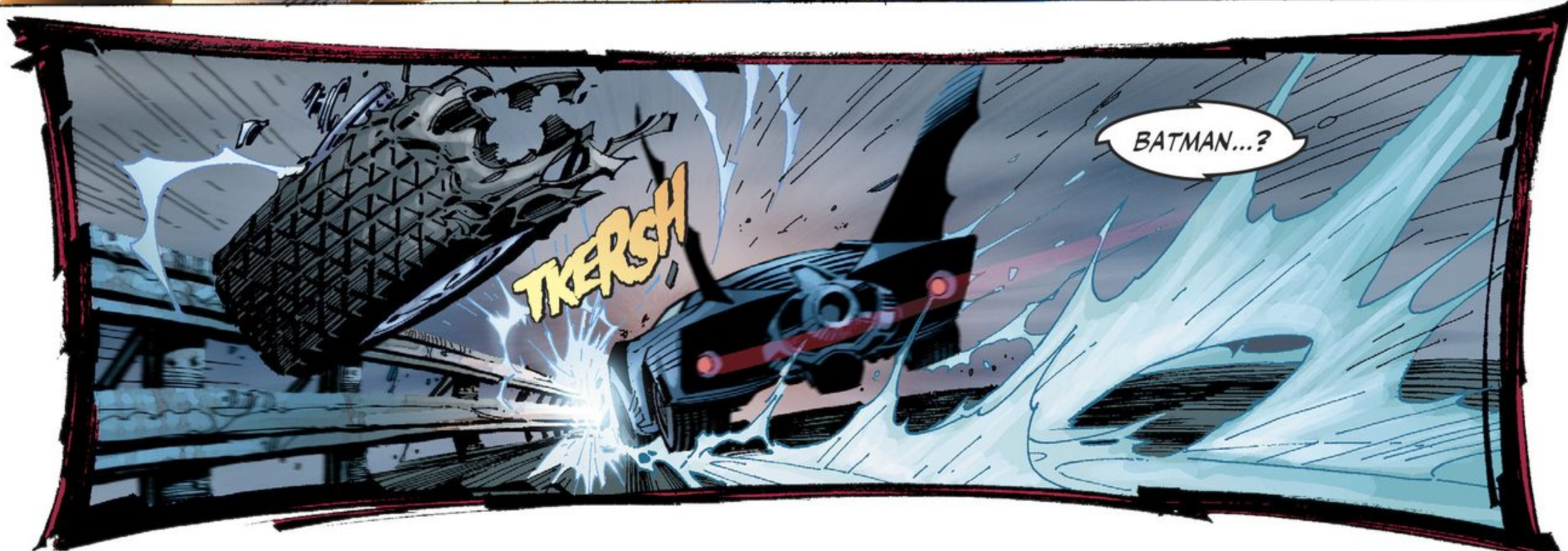
HE WILL EITHER LEAD US TO IT --

-- OR TO THE PERSON WHO ARRANGED THIS ENTIRE --



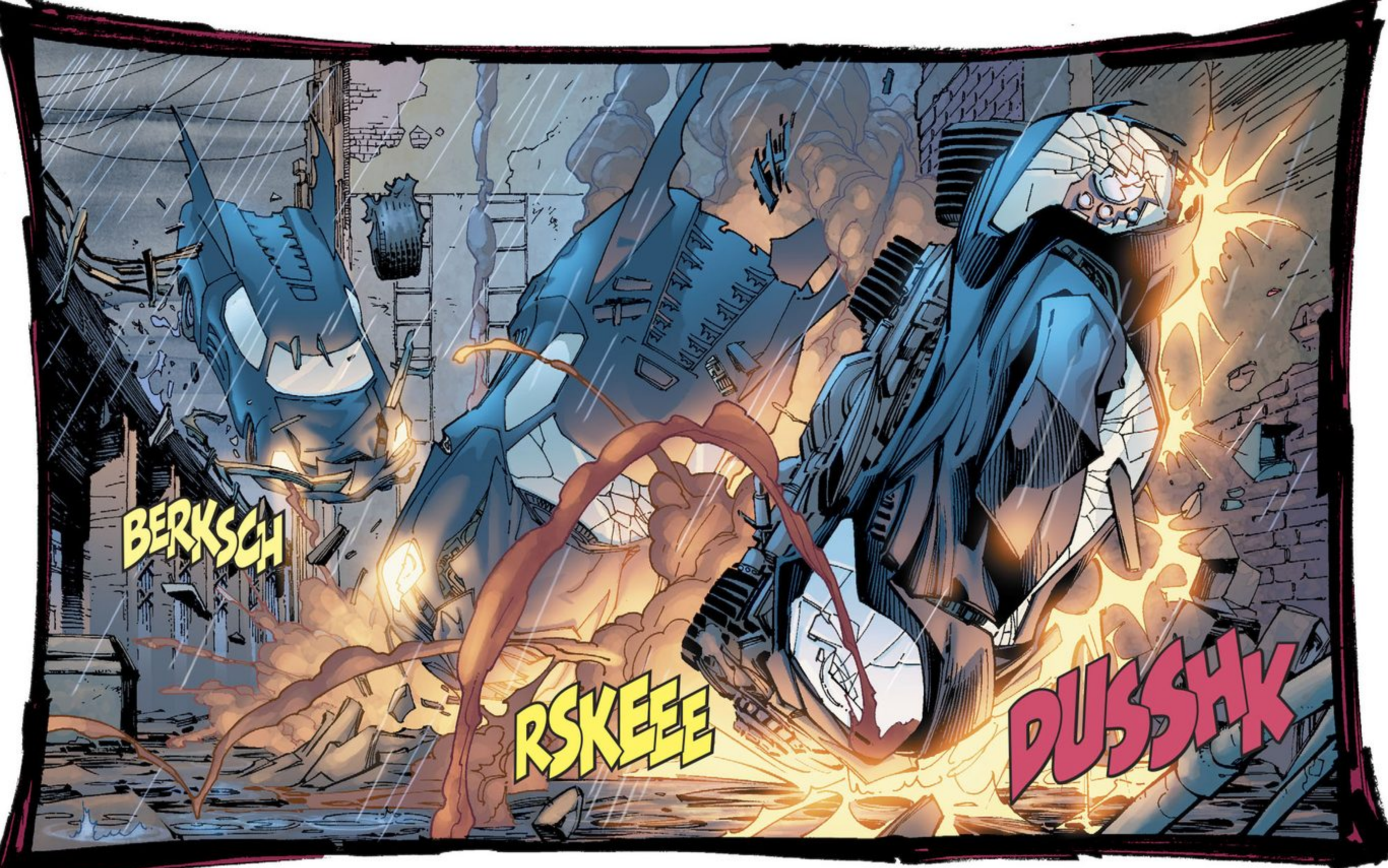
VZIP

PTOOM



TKERSH

BATMAN...?

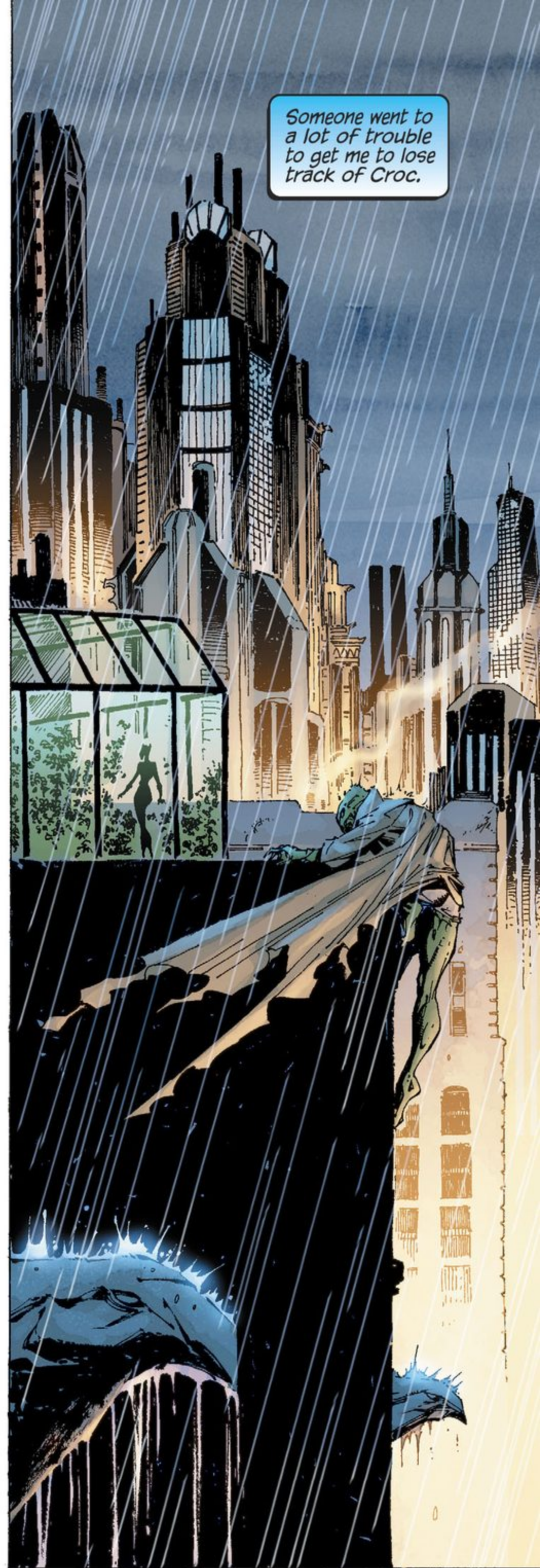




The Batmobile's outfitted with Kevlar-reinforced tires filled with petroleum jelly.

It is the sort of tire they use in a Presidential arcade or an armored car.

A blowout is next to impossible.



Someone went to a lot of trouble to get me to lose track of Croc.



HELLO, KITTY.

They are going to be disappointed.



I
WANT MY
MONEY.

YOU
AND ME
BOTH.



IT WAS
POISON IVY.

SMASH

WRONG
ANSWER.



IVY GOT
WORD TO
ME IN
ARKHAM.

SAID
I'D FIND
YOU HERE
TONIGHT.



WE'VE
BEEN ~~ENGGN~~
SET UP.

IVY WAS
SUPPOSED
TO MEET ME
HERE.

SHE
USED ME TO
STEAL THE
MONEY.



I DON'T
HAVE IT!

THEN
THERE'S NO
REASON NOT
TO KILL YOU --

I've heard
enough.



FTOOOSH

NO!

ZIP

ZIP

ZIP

I TOLD YOU
EARLIER THIS
EVENING...

...YOU
WON'T HURT
ANYONE
ELSE.

TCK

CLINK

FTOOOSH

CATWOMAN --

-- MOVE!

It was
Catwoman
who took the
money from
Croc at the
ransom drop.



I was...disappointed to find out Selina was stealing again...



...and am now oddly relieved to learn she was not entirely responsible for her actions.



To know she is not part of this...

GUHNNN



IT'S AFTER MIDNIGHT.

YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND.

THE ONLY WAY OUT OF THIS IS TO TALK TO ME.

SOMEONE IS PLAYING US -- YOU, ME, CATWOMAN --

-- MAYBE EVEN IVY.

YOU HAVE TO TRUST ME, CROC.

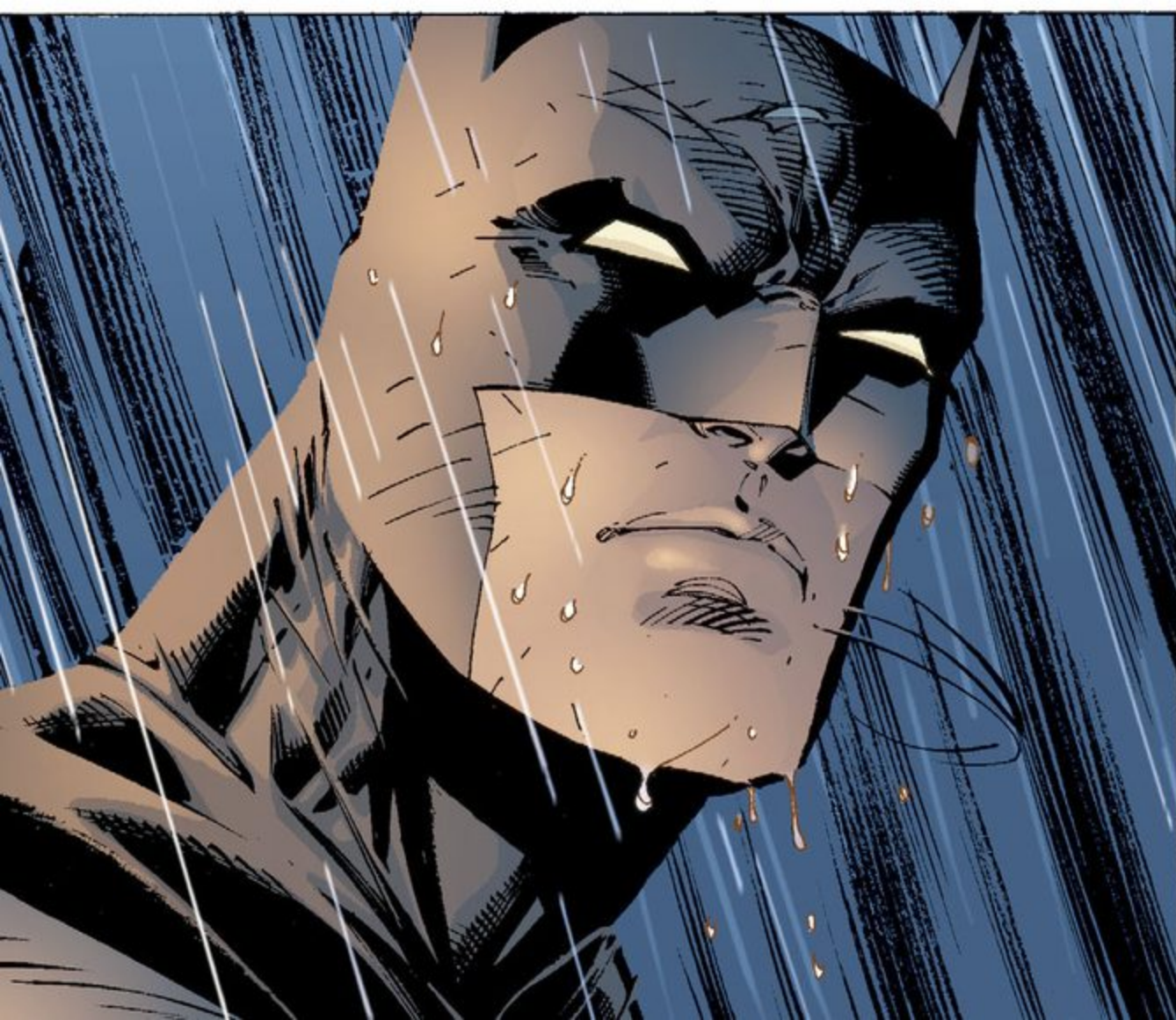
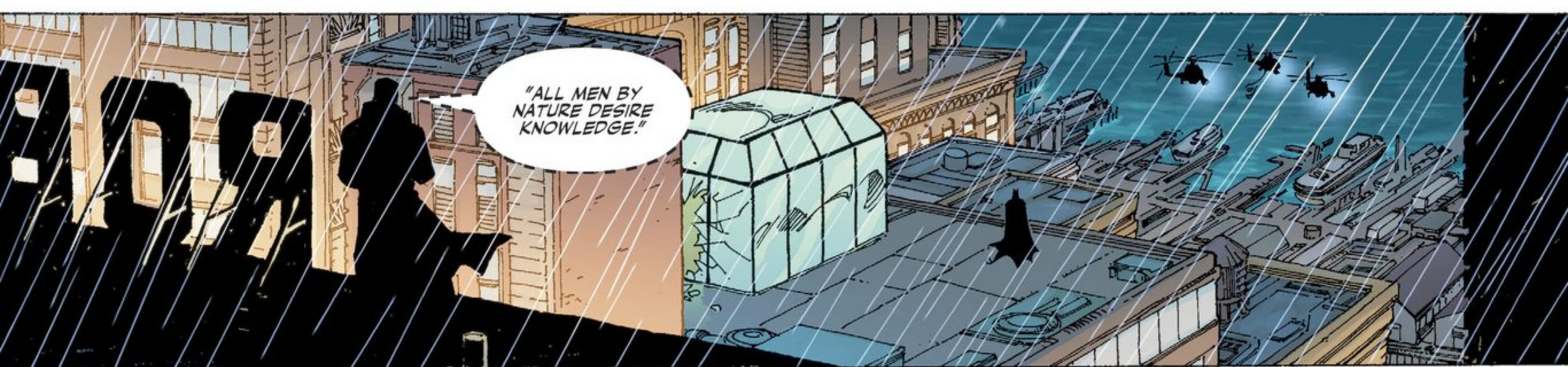


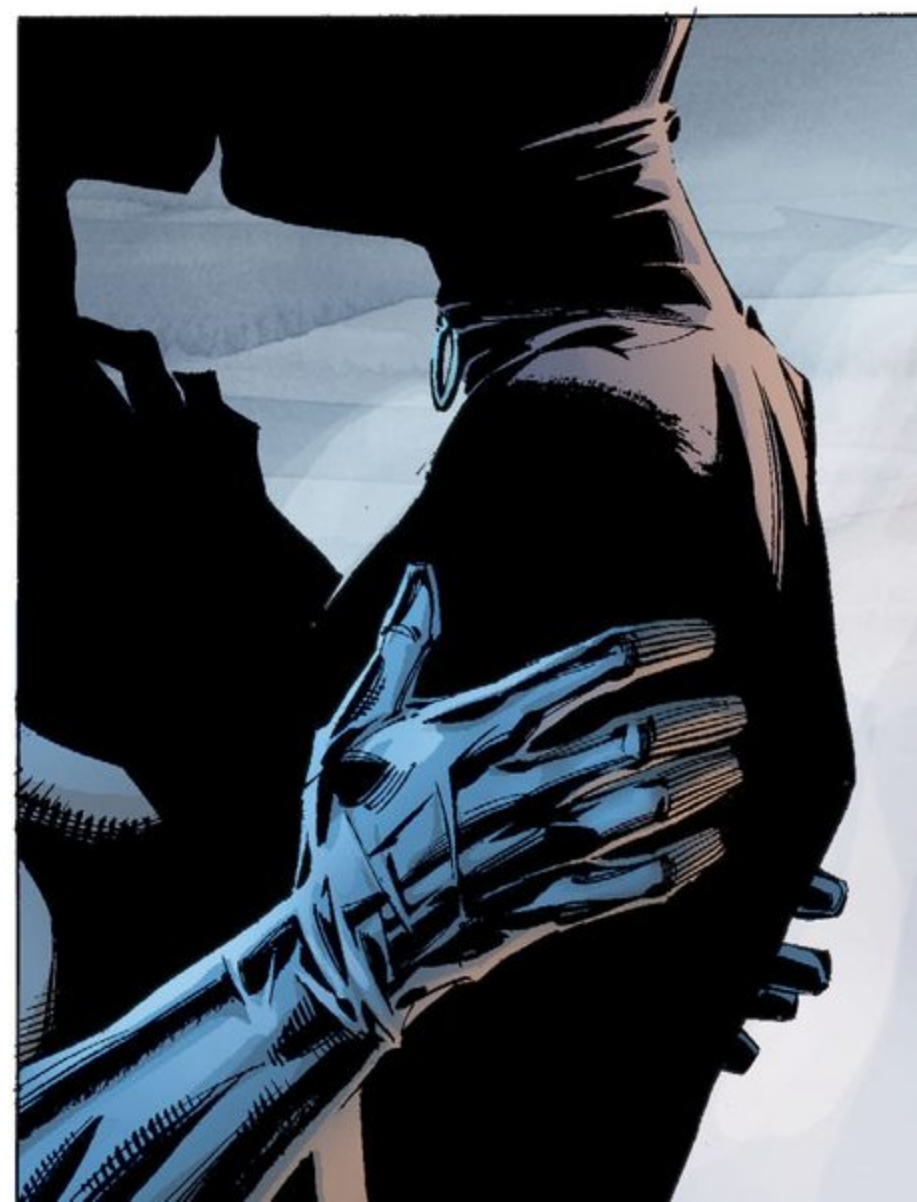
LOOK AT ME...!

...LOOK AT WHAT I'VE BECOME...

...THAT MONEY WAS TO FIX...









*Criminals, by nature,
are a cowardly and
superstitious lot.*

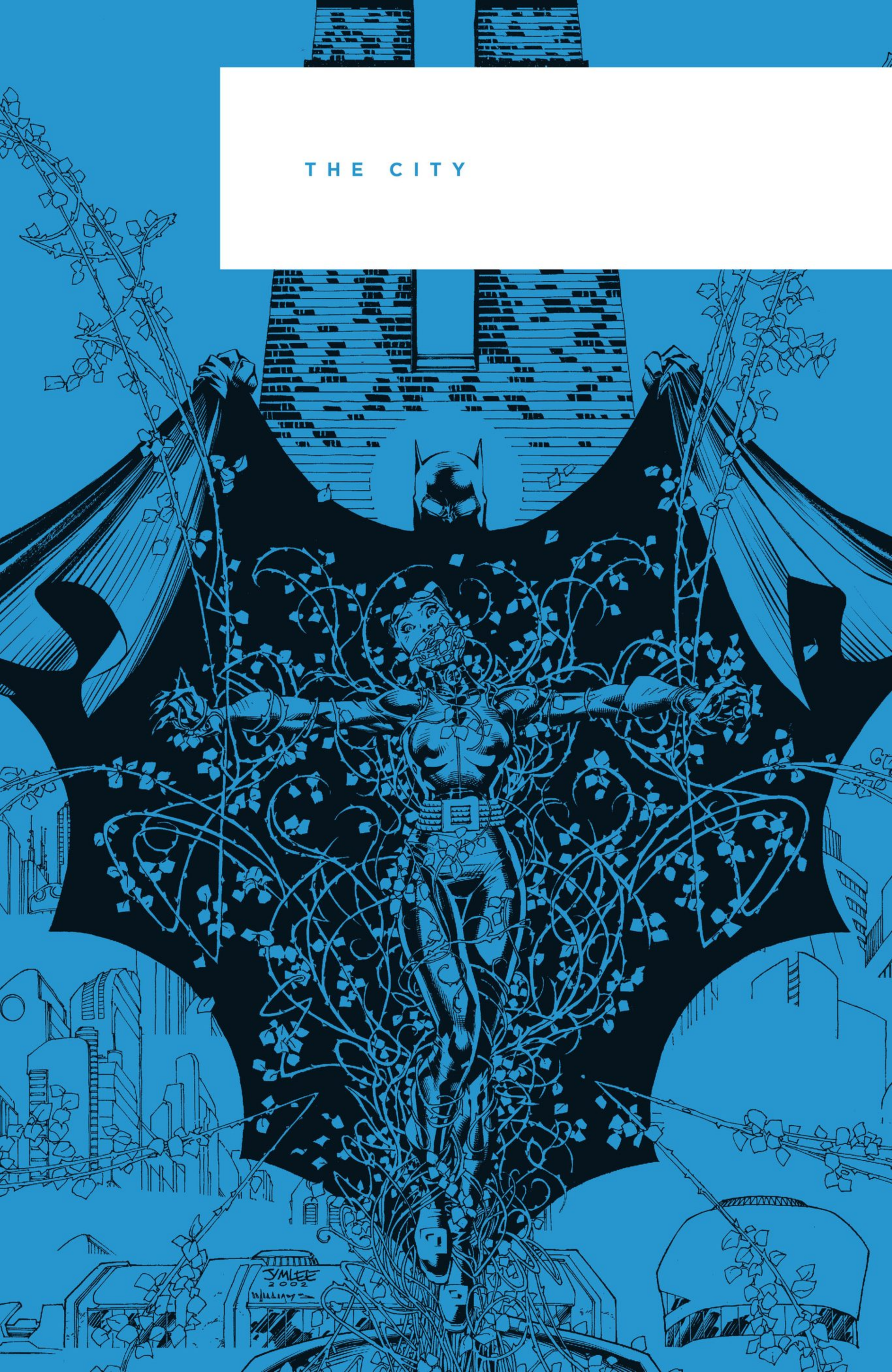
*To instill fear into their
hearts I became a bat.
A monster in the night.*

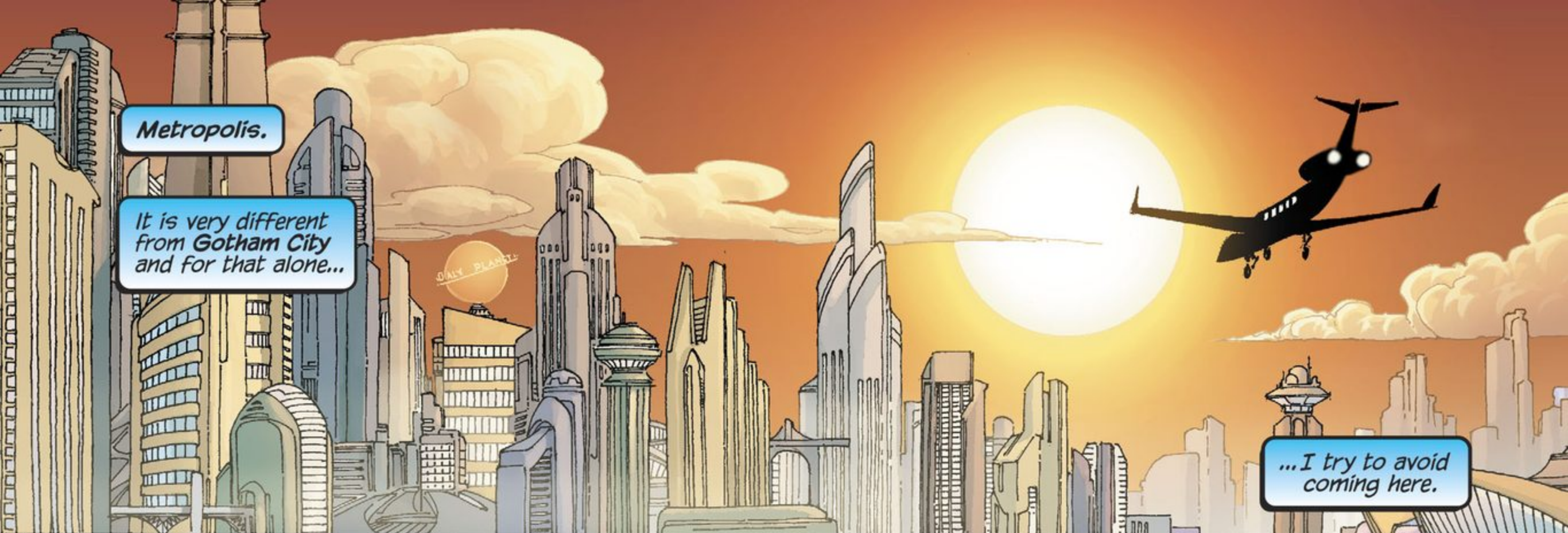
*And in doing so,
have I become the
very thing that all
monsters become...*

... Alone... ?



THE CITY





Metropolis.

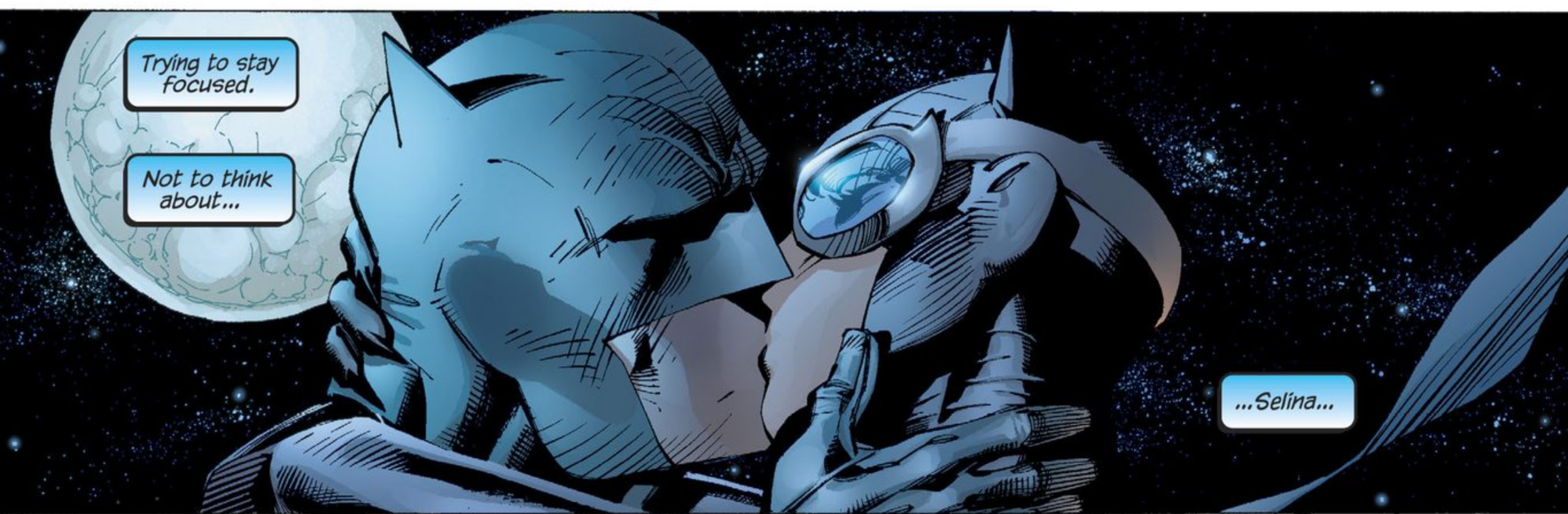
It is very different
from *Gotham City*
and for that alone...

...I try to avoid
coming here.



There are not many reasons
for *Batman* to be in this city.

But, no one will
raise an eyebrow
when *Bruce Wayne*
comes to town.



Trying to stay
focused.

Not to think
about...

...Selina...



The last time
I remember
actually wanting
to be here was
years ago.



I have business interests here that I can pretend to look after...

I'll stop by The Daily Planet. It's always good to see Lois.

BRUCE!
BRUCE WAYNE!



I kissed her...



BRUCE! IT IS YOU. I'VE BEEN YELLING LIKE A FOOL HALFWAY ACROSS THE AIRPORT --

-- I'M SORRY, TOMMY -- MY MIND MUST'VE BEEN -- I WAS JUST THINKING ABOUT YOU.

UH-HUH. MORE LIKE YOU WERE THINKING ABOUT SKIRTS, IF HALF OF WHAT YOUR REPUTATION IS, IS TRUE.

WELL...

Tommy... Doctor Thomas Elliot. The surgeon who saved my life and my childhood friend.



My father had a medical convention to attend. My mother thought we'd spend some time together.

My father brought Alfred. I brought Tommy.

YOU BOYS STAY RIGHT HERE WHILE ALFRED AND I GO REGISTER. RIGHT HERE, DO YOU UNDERSTAND?

YES, SIR.

YOU GOT IT, DOC.

Tommy spoke to my father in a way that no one else dared. But, that was Tommy...

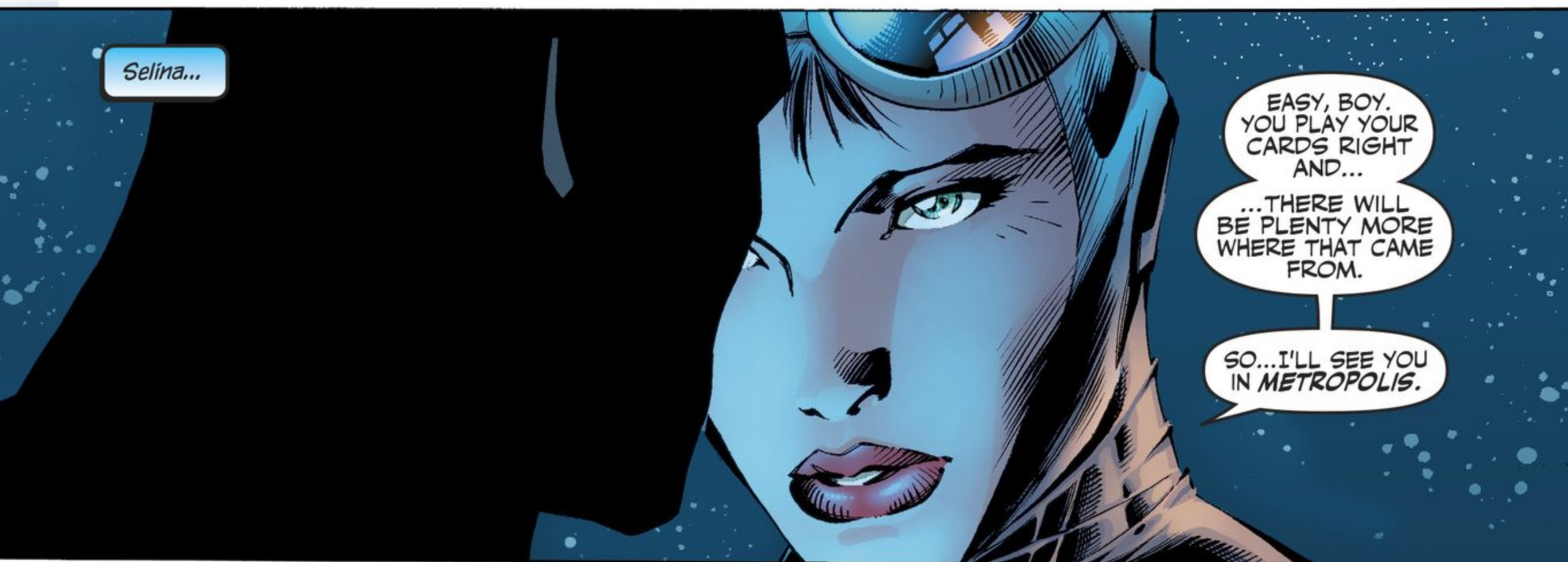


DO YOU REMEMBER THE TIME WHEN MY FATHER BROUGHT US HERE?

SAY, YOU REALLY WERE THINKING ABOUT ME, AFTER ALL.

BE A SPORT AND LET'S RIDE IN TOGETHER.

UNLESS... YOU'RE MEETING SOMEONE?



Selina...

EASY, BOY. YOU PLAY YOUR CARDS RIGHT AND...

...THERE WILL BE PLENTY MORE WHERE THAT CAME FROM.

SO...I'LL SEE YOU IN METROPOLIS.



DID YOU EVER TELL ANYONE?

WHAT WE SAW? NOT A SOUL. STICK A NEEDLE, BRUCE.



UH... BRUCE.

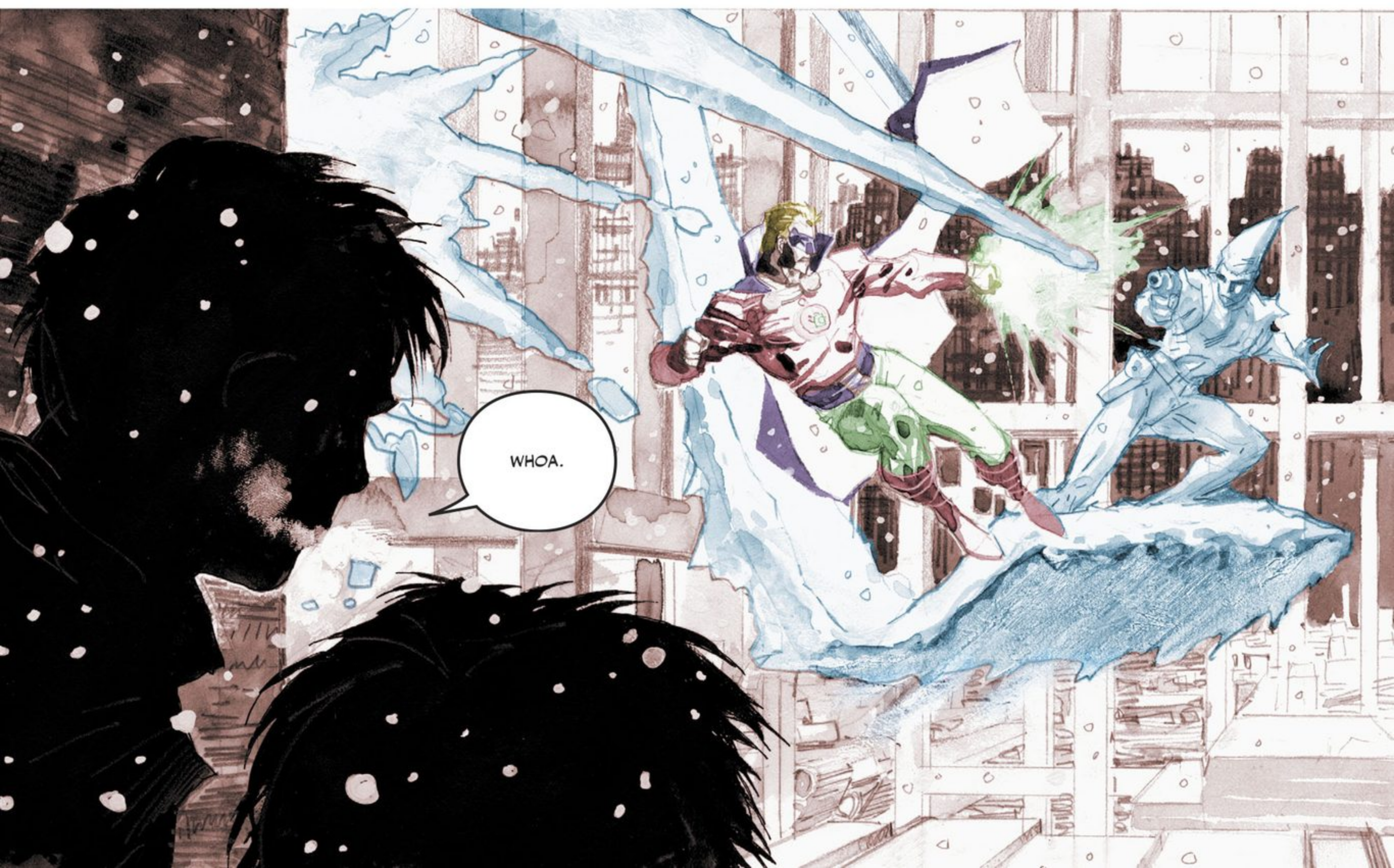
LOOK. UP IN THE SKY --

WHERE --?



It was one of the
most extraordinary
things I had ever
seen in my life.

THERE! IT'S
GREEN LANTERN!





WHERE'D THEY GO?

DOWN THE BLOCK, C'MON --!

NO. WE SHOULD HEAD BACK.

THAT BAD GUY IS *THE ICICLE*. HE'LL NEVER WIN.

HOW DO YOU KNOW *THAT*?

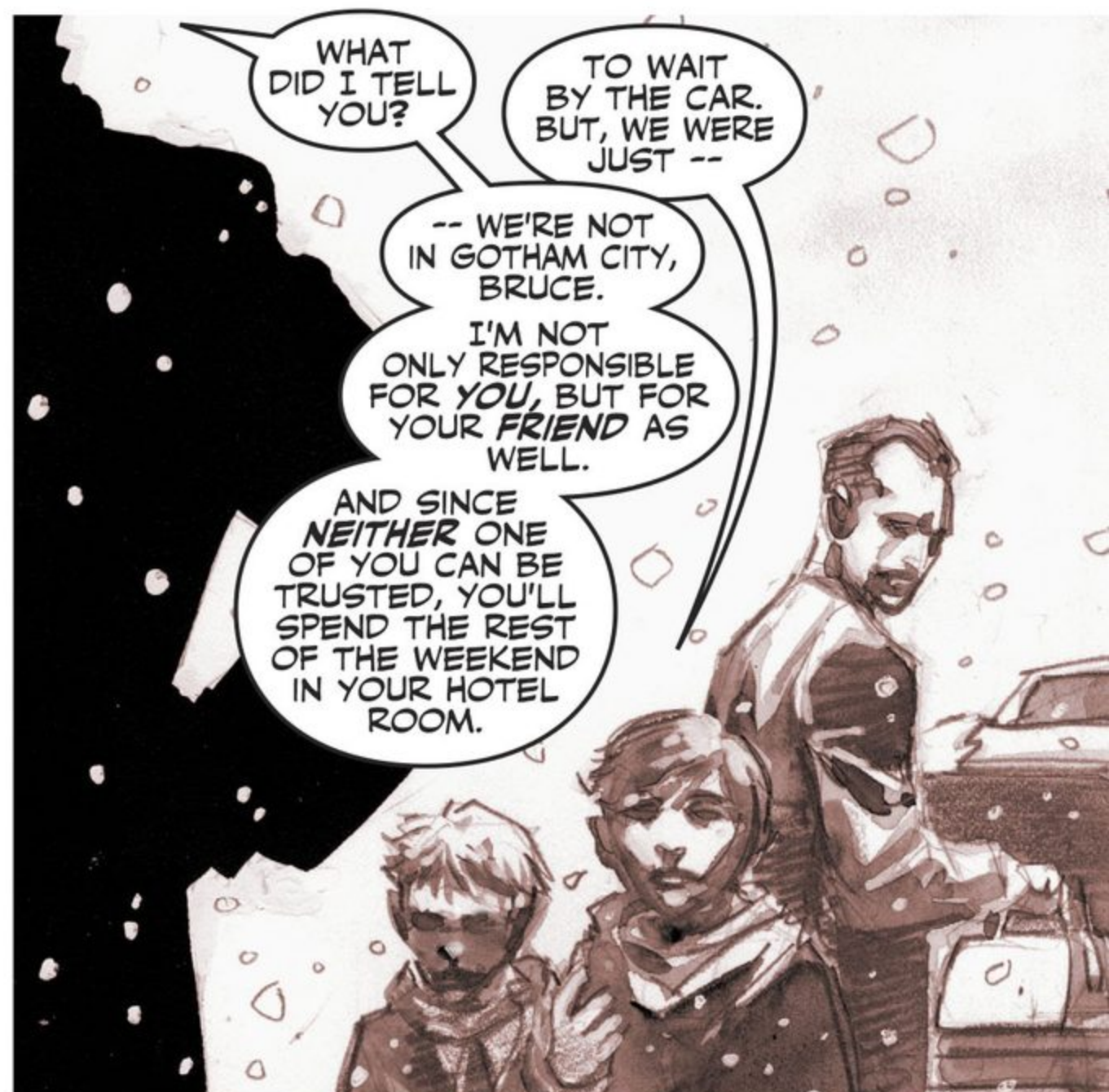
IT'S LIKE I'M ALWAYS TELLING YOU, BRUCE. YOU GOTTA BE ABLE TO *THINK* LIKE YOUR OPPONENT.



ALFRED, BRING MY MEDICAL BAG UP TO THE --

-- WHERE ARE THE *BOYS*?

I BELIEVE THAT'S THEM COMING THIS WAY NOW, SIR.



WHAT DID I TELL YOU?

TO WAIT BY THE CAR. BUT, WE WERE JUST --

-- WE'RE NOT IN GOTHAM CITY, BRUCE.

I'M NOT ONLY RESPONSIBLE FOR *YOU*, BUT FOR YOUR *FRIEND* AS WELL.

AND SINCE *NEITHER* ONE OF YOU CAN BE TRUSTED, YOU'LL SPEND THE REST OF THE WEEKEND IN YOUR HOTEL ROOM.



We never left the room the entire time we were in Metropolis.

We stayed perched by the window, hoping to get a glimpse of another hero, but none came.



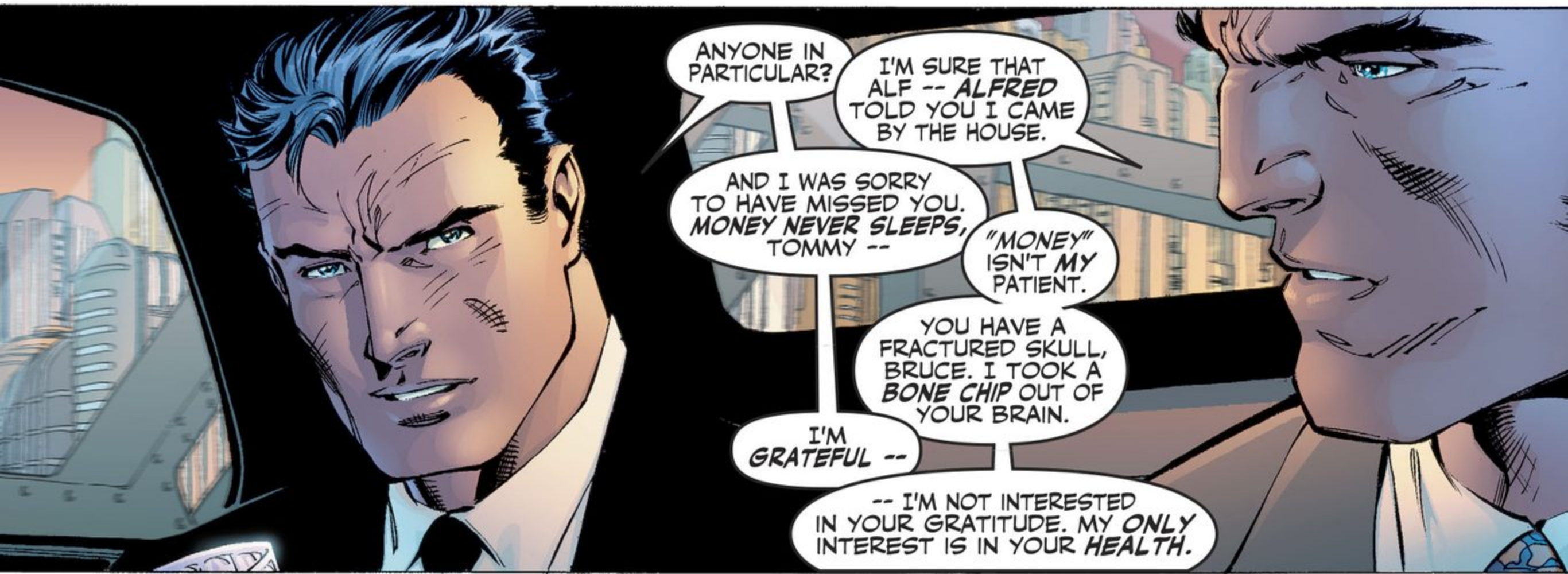
Soon after that, my parents were killed and I hardly saw Tommy again...



THINGS
CHANGE.

IF WE'RE
TALKING ABOUT
METROPOLIS,
IT ACTUALLY
HAPPENED HERE
OVERNIGHT.

CITIES ARE **MEANT**
TO RISE AND FALL, BRUCE.
I WAS REFERRING TO **PEOPLE**.



ANYONE IN
PARTICULAR?

I'M SURE THAT
ALF -- **ALFRED**
TOLD YOU I CAME
BY THE HOUSE.

AND I WAS SORRY
TO HAVE MISSED YOU.
MONEY NEVER SLEEPS,
TOMMY --

"**MONEY**"
ISN'T MY
PATIENT.

YOU HAVE A
FRACTURED SKULL,
BRUCE. I TOOK A
BONE CHIP OUT OF
YOUR BRAIN.

I'M
GRATEFUL --

-- I'M NOT INTERESTED
IN YOUR GRATITUDE. MY **ONLY**
INTEREST IS IN YOUR **HEALTH**.

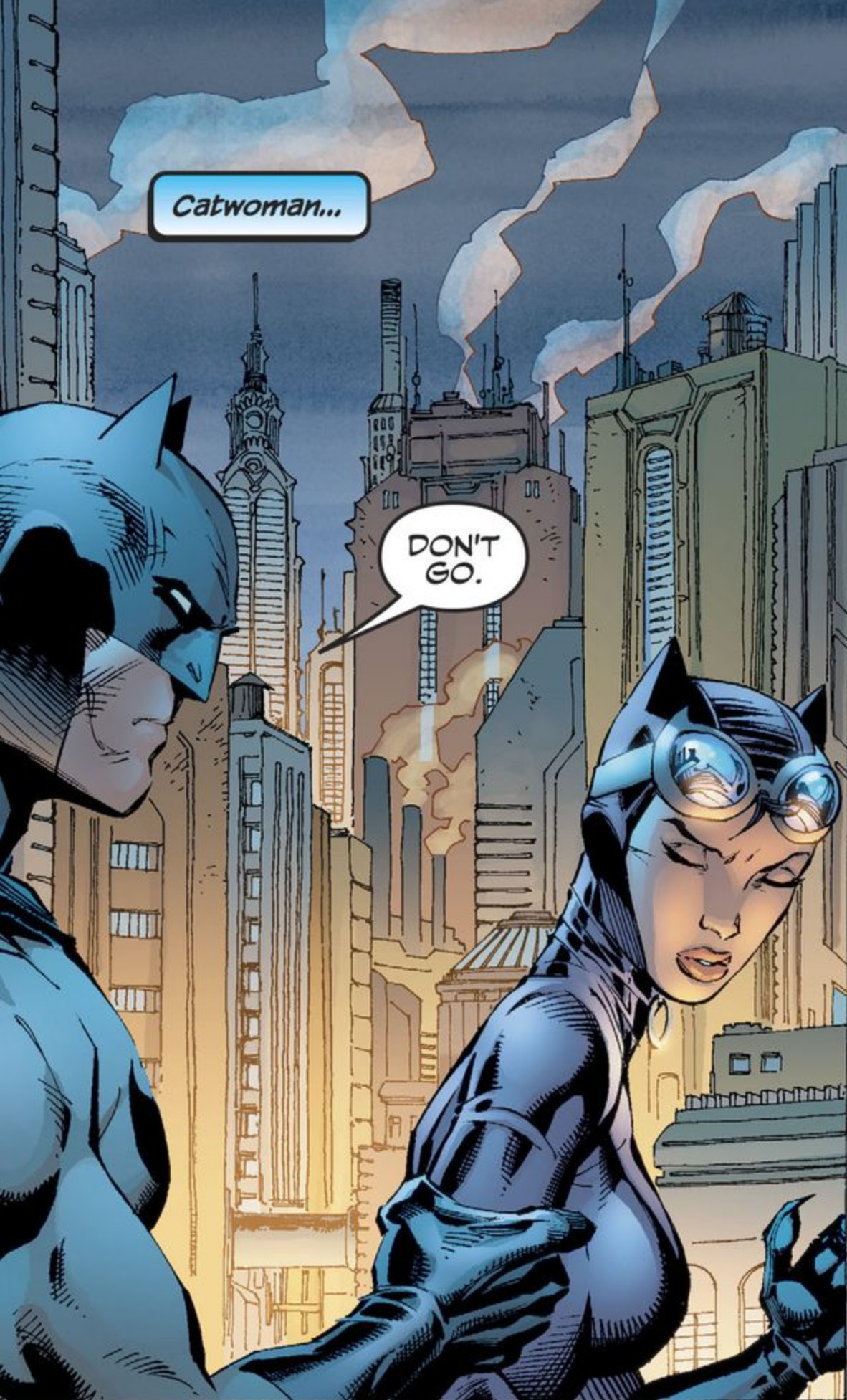


I TAKE
GOOD CARE OF
MYSELF.



I DON'T DOUBT THAT.
BUT, I'M NOT SURE YOU'VE
GIVEN YOURSELF ADEQUATE
TIME TO HEAL.

YOU'RE NOT
SUPERMAN, YOU
KNOW.



Catwoman...

DON'T GO.



JUST BECAUSE I LET YOU KISS ME --

--DOESN'T MEAN YOU GET TO TREAT ME LIKE YOUR TOY WONDER.



TAKE THIS.



IT'S NOT YOUR HIGH SCHOOL RING OR ANYTHING, IS IT?

METROPOLIS IS A BIG CITY. IF YOU FIND POISON IVY FIRST, ACTIVATE THAT BY PRESSING IT.

SO, I CALL, YOU COME?

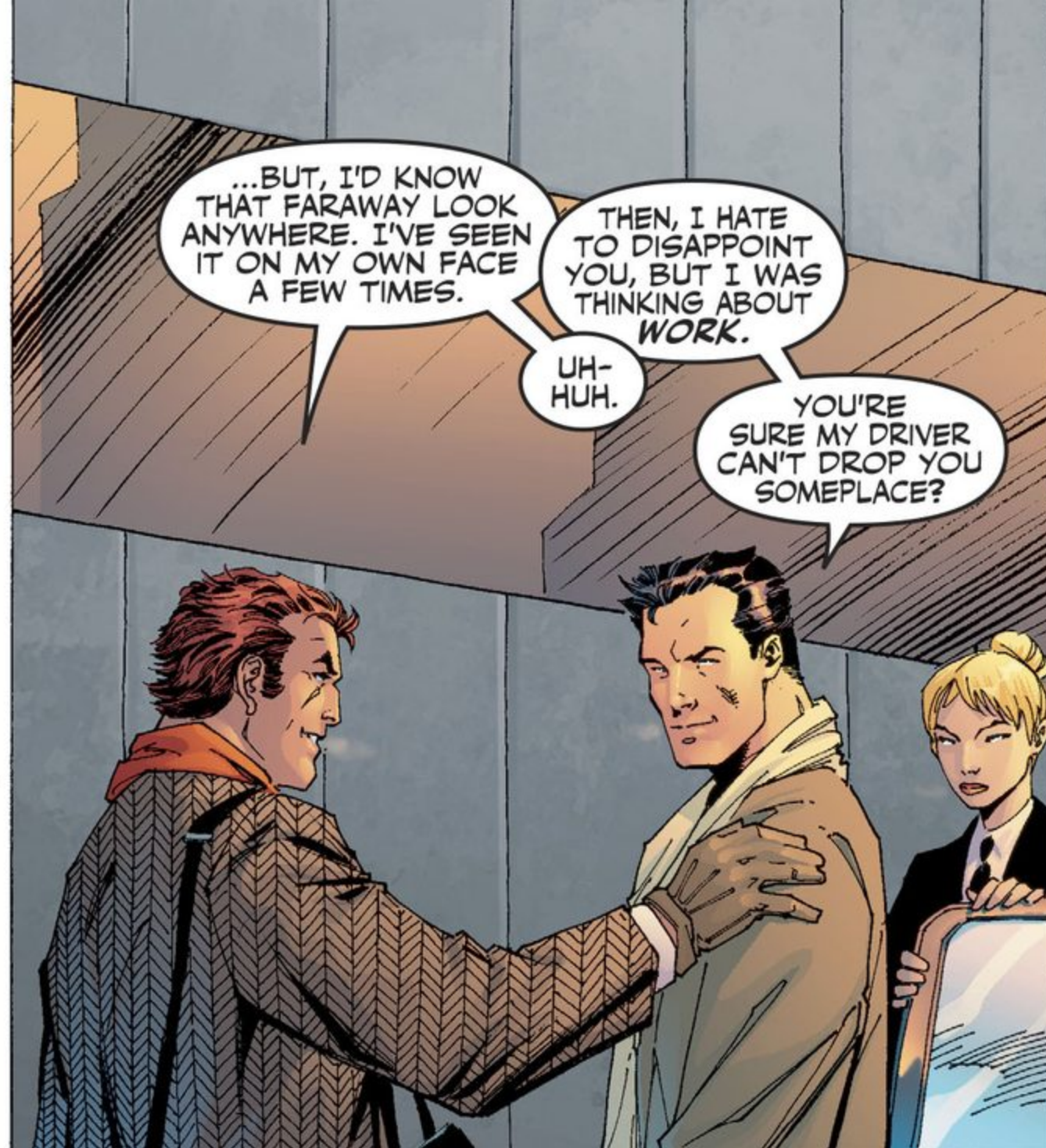
YOU CAN'T TRAIN A CAT TO DO THAT.



OH, AND...

...IF I FIND IVY FIRST...?

YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO WAIT YOUR TURN.



...BUT, I'D KNOW THAT FARAWAY LOOK ANYWHERE. I'VE SEEN IT ON MY OWN FACE A FEW TIMES.

THEN, I HATE TO DISAPPOINT YOU, BUT I WAS THINKING ABOUT WORK.

UH-HUH.

YOU'RE SURE MY DRIVER CAN'T DROP YOU SOMEPLACE?

AS MUCH AS I'D LIKE THIS FINE YOUNG WOMAN TO TAKE ME ANYWHERE --

--IT'S JUST A FEW BLOCKS AND I'D BE A BIT OF A HYPOCRITE IF I DIDN'T SAY I COULD USE THE EXERCISE.

THERE IS SOMETHING YOU COULD DO FOR ME, HOWEVER.

I HOPE SHE'S WORTH IT.

WHA -- WHO?

THE GIRL. I ASSUME IT'S A GIRL. DON'T BE SO COY, BRUCE. I KNOW MY CONVERSATION WASN'T ALL THAT SCINTILLATING...

YOU STILL HAVE THOSE ANTIQUE WAR GAME PIECES?

I DO, ACTUALLY.

AND I HAVE MINE. UP FOR A GAME?

YOU'RE ON.

AND I WANT YOU TO ACTUALLY *SHOW UP* FOR AN APPOINTMENT WITH ME TO CHECK ON HOW YOU'RE DOING.

THAT'S TWO SOMETHINGS YOU WANT ME TO DO FOR YOU.

IT IS, ISN'T IT...?

"Things change..."
Never more so than with what is happening -- with what could happen with Selina...



The Daily Planet.

HOW MANY "P'S" IN "THERAPIST"?

ONE, LOIS.

THANKS, SMALLVILLE. HEY, LOOK AT THAT --

--IF YOU PUT A SPACE IN "THERAPIST," YOU GET "THE RAPIST." THAT'S KIND OF CLEVER.

KIND OF...

CLARK, GIVE ME JUST A FEW MORE SECONDS AND WE CAN GRAB SOME DINNER.



I KNEW PUTTING A FLORIST IN THE LOBBY OF THIS BUILDING WAS A GOOD IDEA.

WHO --?



HOW'S MY FAVORITE GAL REPORTER?

BRUCE!

LOIS, I'M NOT SURE THAT P.D.A. IS THE MOST APPROPRIATE FORM OF BEHAVIOR WITH THE OWNER OF THE DAILY PLANET.



P.D.A.?

PUBLIC DISPLAY OF AFFECTION. YOU CAN TAKE THE BOY OUT OF KANSAS, BRUCE, BUT...

Lois and Clark. He made the choice to be honest with her. To share both sides of his life.

Could I find that trust in...?



MIND
IF I LOG
ONTO YOUR
COMPUTER,
LOIS?

STOCK
TIP.

ANYTHING
YOU NEED,
BRUCE.

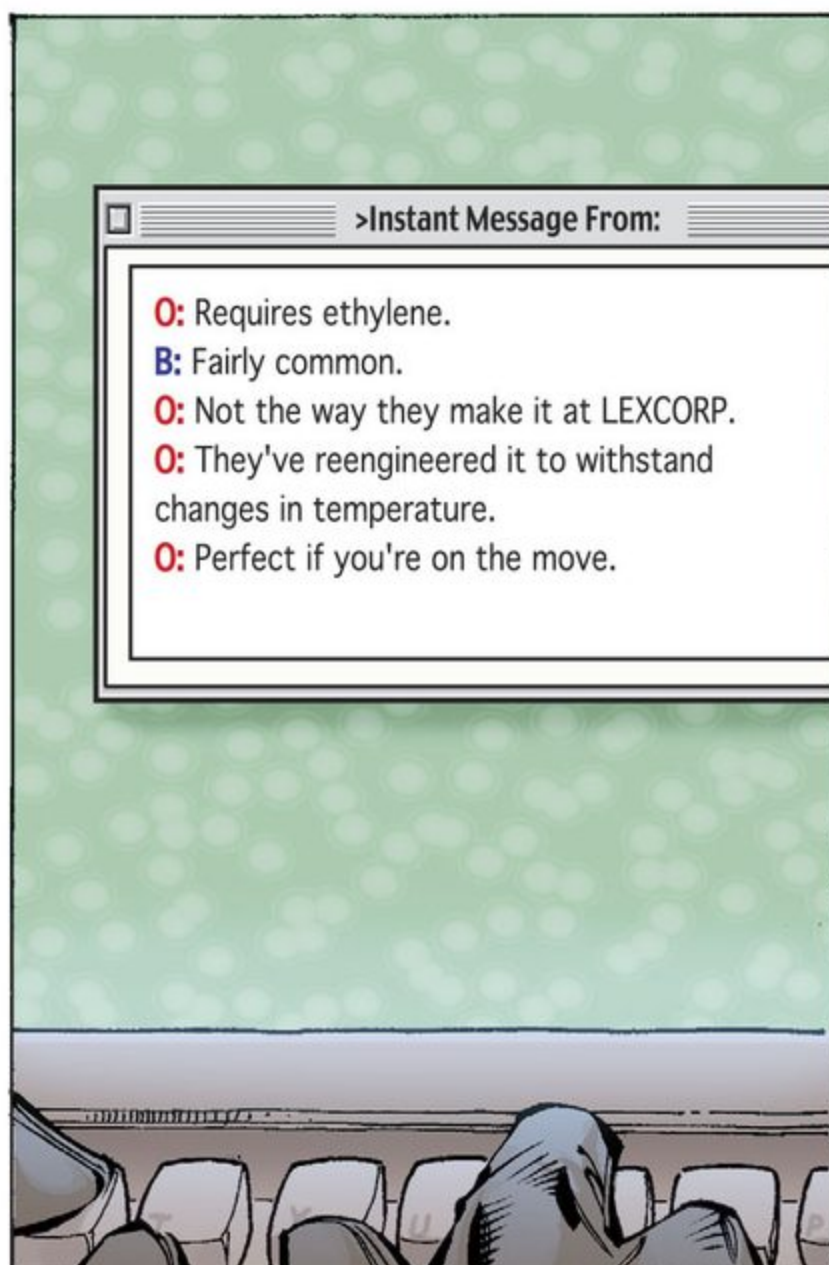
CLARK,
DINNER IS...

...GOING
TO HAVE TO WAIT.
I UNDERSTAND.



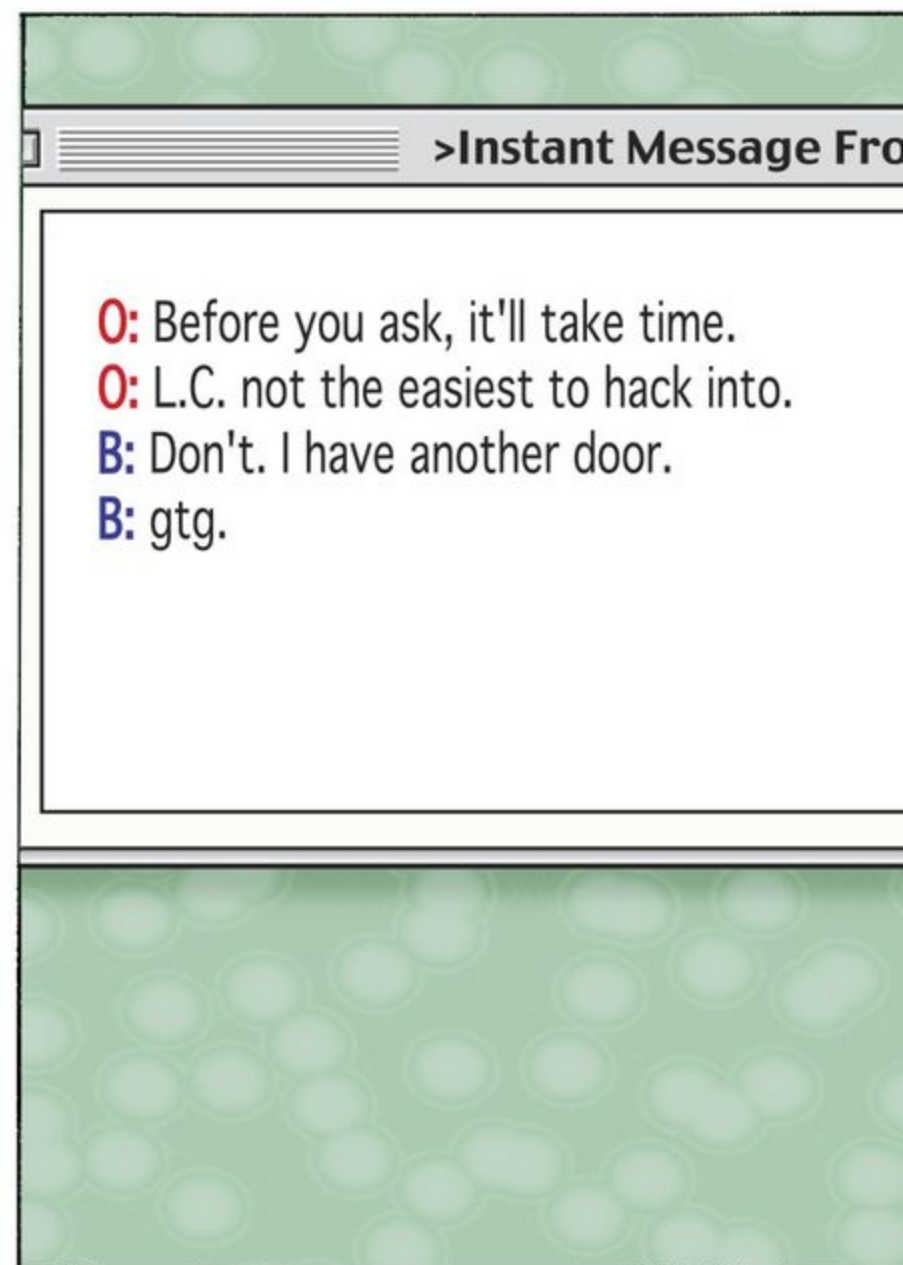
>Instant Message From:

B: O?
O: Metropolis?
B: Secure this line.
O: Done.
B: News on Aztec gilia?



>Instant Message From:

O: Requires ethylene.
B: Fairly common.
O: Not the way they make it at LEXCORP.
O: They've reengineered it to withstand
changes in temperature.
O: Perfect if you're on the move.



>Instant Message From:

O: Before you ask, it'll take time.
O: L.C. not the easiest to hack into.
B: Don't. I have another door.
B: gtg.



IF I HAD
READ ALL THAT,
WOULD I HAVE
BEEN JEALOUS
OR RICH?

NEITHER.
YOU'D HAVE
BEEN BORED
TO TEARS.

NO, SERIOUSLY,
BRUCE, OTHER
THAN MY SPARKLING
PERSONALITY,
WHAT BRINGS
YOU TO --?

BRUCE!



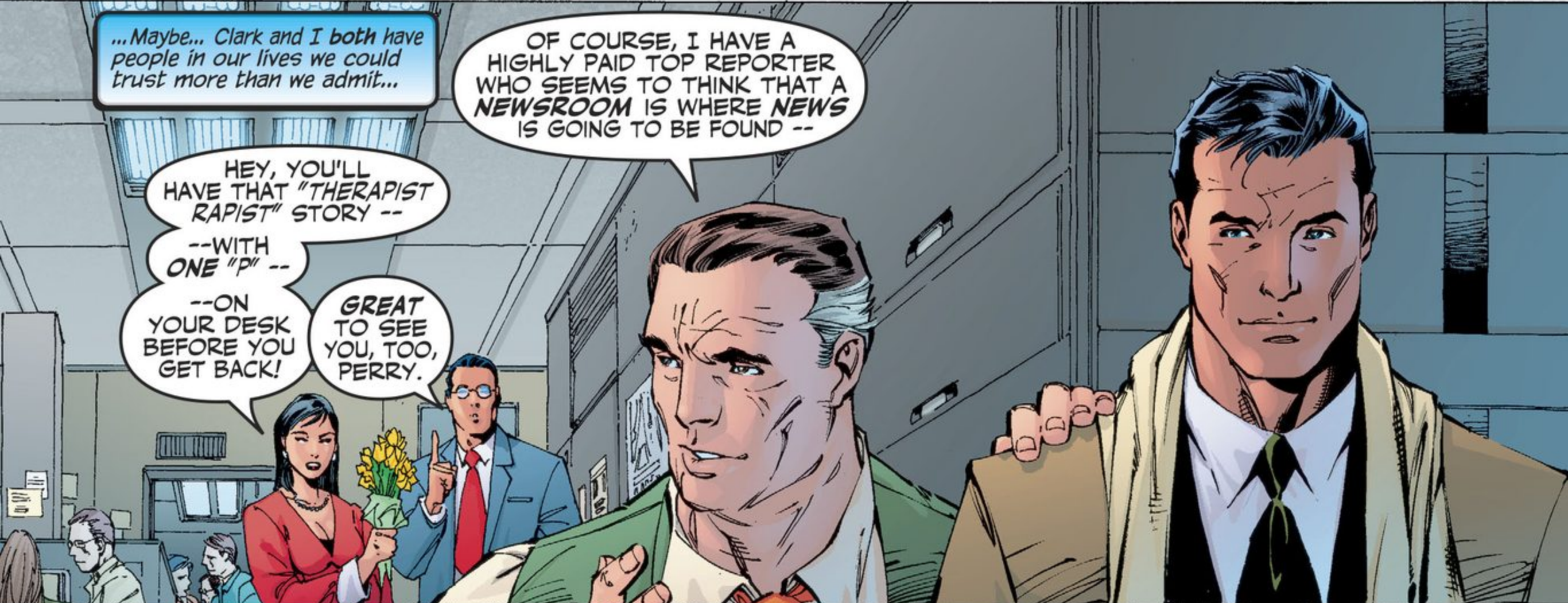
LUCIUS
WARNED ME
YOU MIGHT BE
DROPPING IN.
BUY YOU A
DRINK?

THAT DEPENDS.
HAVE YOU RUN MY
NEWSPAPER INTO THE
GROUND YET?

NOT
FOR LACK OF
TRYING.

*Perry White is too good
a reporter not to have
uncovered Clark's secret.
And yet, he acts otherwise...*

*...reminding me how good
a detective Jim Gordon
is back in Gotham City...*



*...Maybe... Clark and I both have
people in our lives we could
trust more than we admit...*

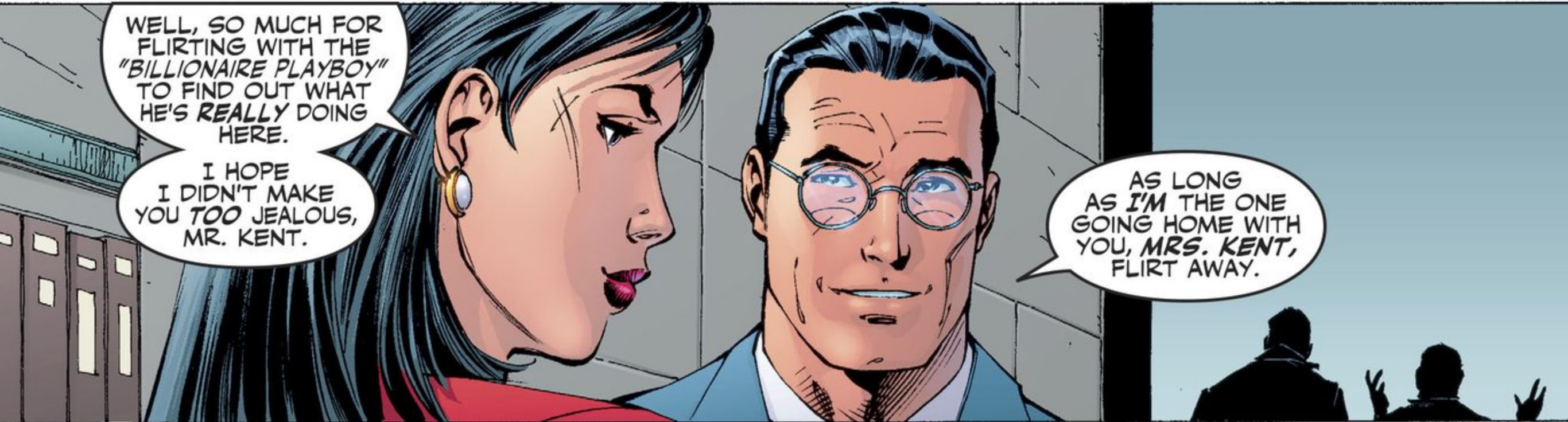
OF COURSE, I HAVE A
HIGHLY PAID TOP REPORTER
WHO SEEMS TO THINK THAT A
NEWSROOM IS WHERE **NEWS**
IS GOING TO BE FOUND --

HEY, YOU'LL
HAVE THAT "THERAPIST
RAPIST" STORY --

--WITH
ONE "P" --

--ON
YOUR DESK
BEFORE YOU
GET BACK!

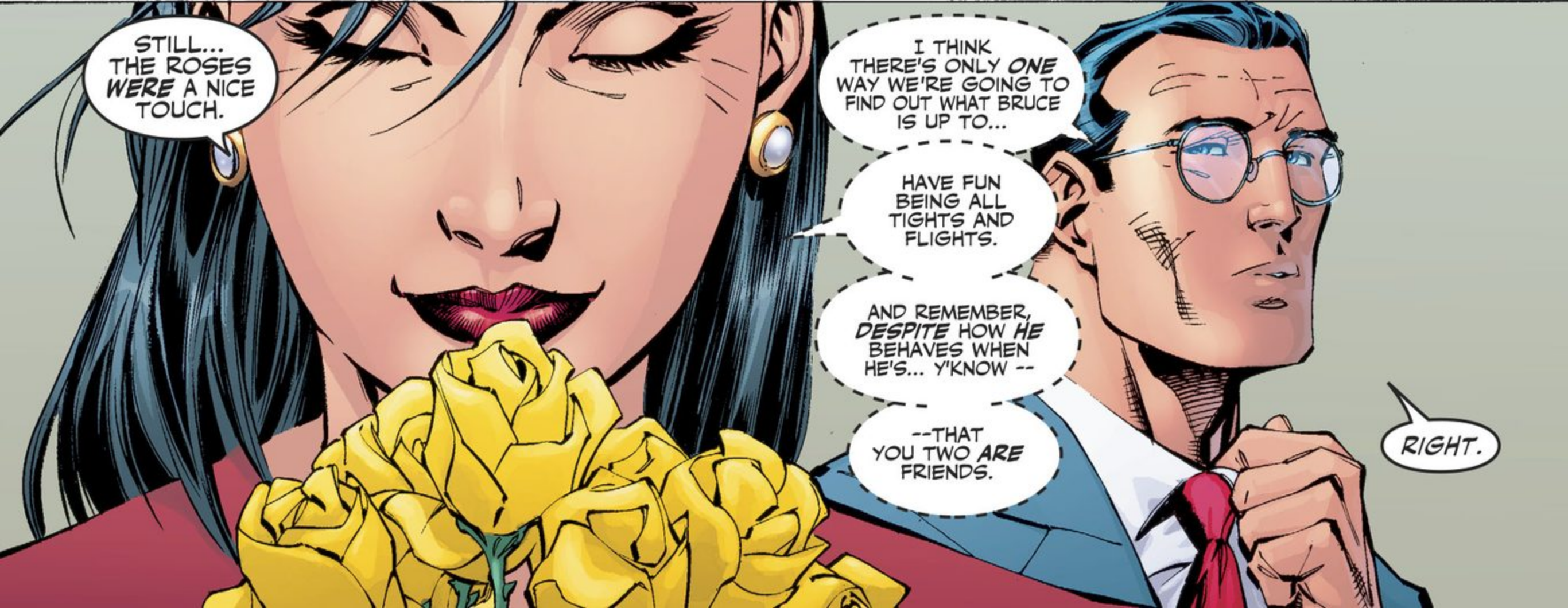
GREAT
TO SEE
YOU, TOO,
PERRY.



WELL, SO MUCH FOR
FLIRTING WITH THE
"BILLIONAIRE PLAYBOY"
TO FIND OUT WHAT
HE'S **REALLY** DOING
HERE.

I HOPE
I DIDN'T MAKE
YOU TOO JEALOUS,
MR. KENT.

AS LONG
AS I'M THE ONE
GOING HOME WITH
YOU, **MRS. KENT**,
FLIRT AWAY.



STILL...
THE ROSES
WERE A NICE
TOUCH.

I THINK
THERE'S ONLY **ONE**
WAY WE'RE GOING TO
FIND OUT WHAT BRUCE
IS UP TO...

HAVE FUN
BEING ALL
TIGHTS AND
FLIGHTS.

AND REMEMBER,
DESPITE HOW HE
BEHAVES WHEN
HE'S... Y'KNOW --

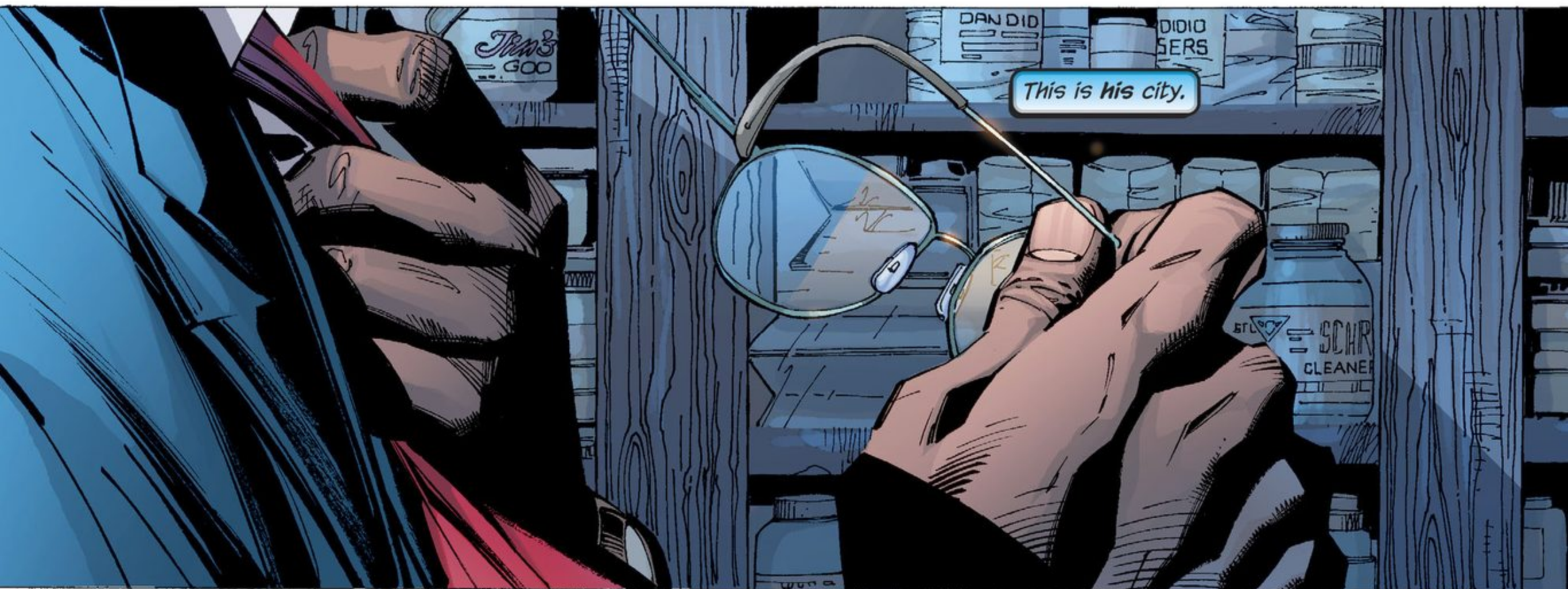
--THAT
YOU TWO **ARE**
FRIENDS.

RIGHT.

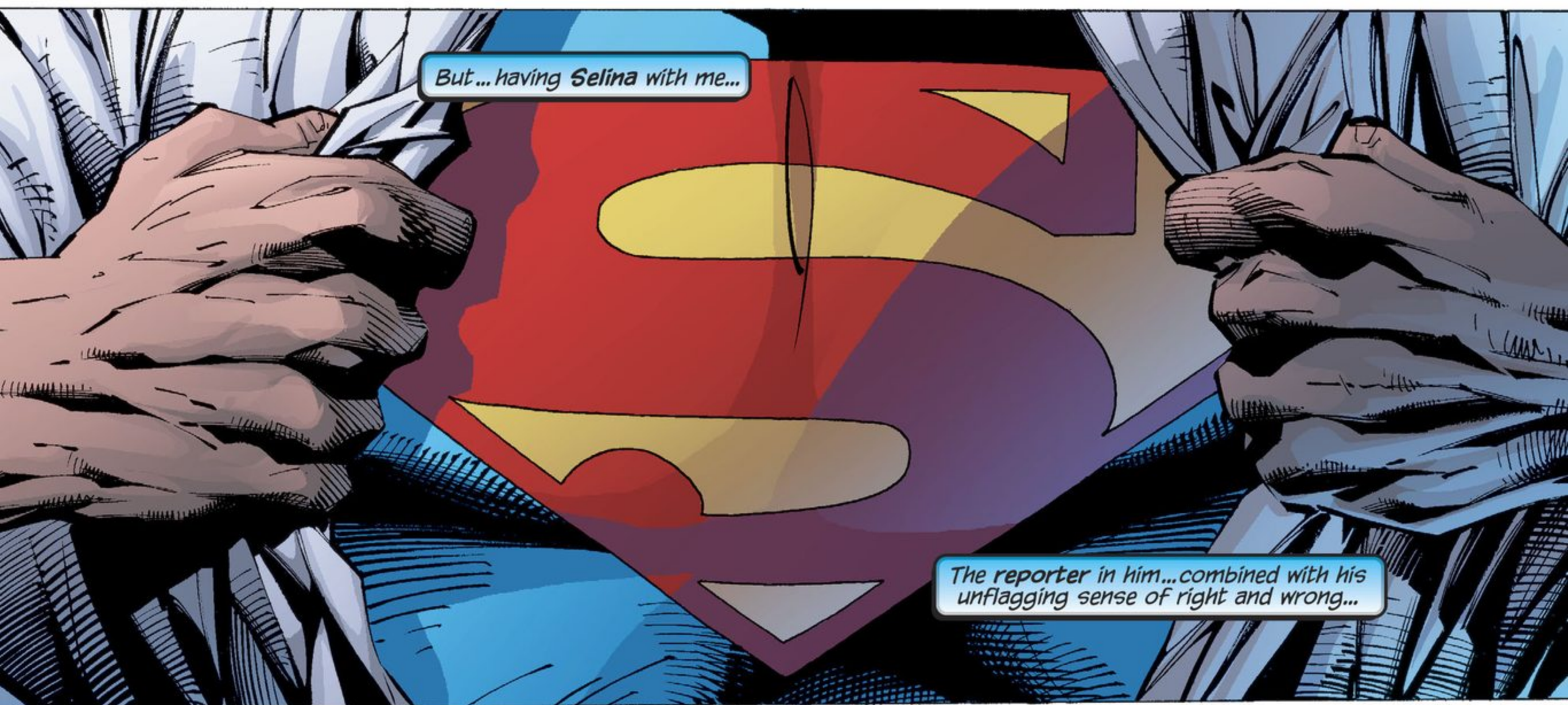


I had thought about alerting Clark before we arrived.

1138



This is his city.



But...having Selina with me...

The reporter in him...combined with his unflagging sense of right and wrong...



...I'm not sure he'd understand...

...and I'm sure I don't want to explain it...



The LexCorp Towers.



YOU *COULD* COME TO METROPOLIS MORE OFTEN.

THIS ISN'T A SOCIAL VISIT.

IS IT EVER?

LexCorp was formerly owned and operated by **Lex Luthor**, now The President of The United States.

Currently, **Talia Head**, the estranged daughter of the megalomaniac **Ra's Al Ghul**, was handed the reins when Luthor took the Oath of Office and was forced to divest himself of any conflict of interest.

Not surprisingly, LexCorp remains one of the nation's largest weapon suppliers.

Talia. Ra's. Luthor. Calling them a nest of vipers is an insult to vipers...



WHAT DOES "THE DETECTIVE" WANT FROM ME NOW?

THIS COMPANY MAKES A CHEMICAL CALLED "ETHYLENE."

YES. IT'S A PLANT HORMONE. RAISING AZTEC GILIA, ARE WE?

IS THAT *SURPRISE* I SAW FLASH IN YOUR EYES? I NEVER WAS *JUST* A PRETTY FACE.

TALIA.

IF SOMEONE IN THIS CITY HAS ACQUIRED LARGE DOSES OF ETHYLENE, I HAVE TO KNOW.



HHMM

YOU'RE VIBRATING.



I'M NEEDED ELSEWHERE.

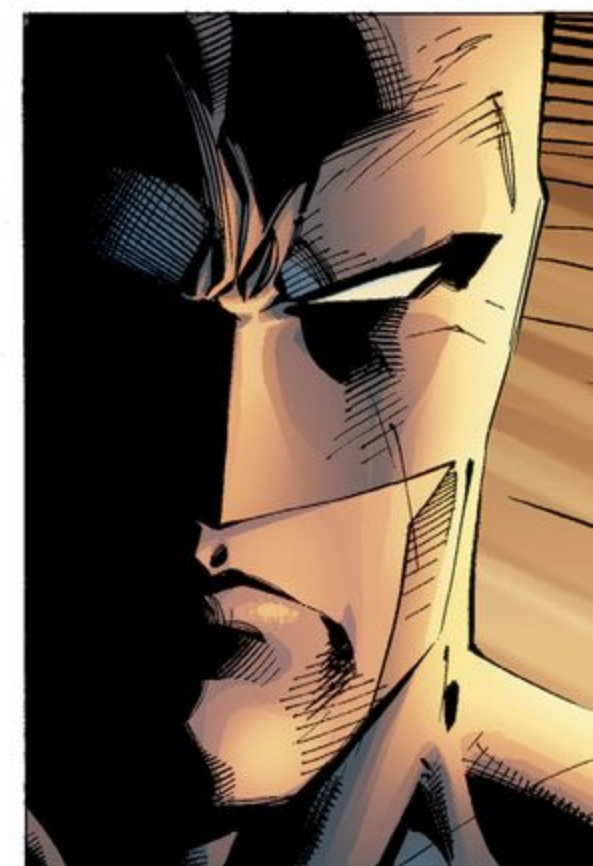
My past relationship with Talia is... was complicated. I think of **Selina** and the matter at hand.

KKK



THERE IS SOMETHING... *DIFFERENT* ABOUT YOU. I AM NOT SURE I LIKE IT.

BUT, I *WILL* GET YOU THE INFORMATION YOU SEEK...



Catwoman...



In Gotham City, Killer Croc led me to a penthouse where he believed Poison Ivy would be.

The plants I found there were *Aztec gilia*. They are, at best, difficult to grow in an indoor environment.

Ivy could no more abandon them than a mother could her child, taking them with her to Metropolis.

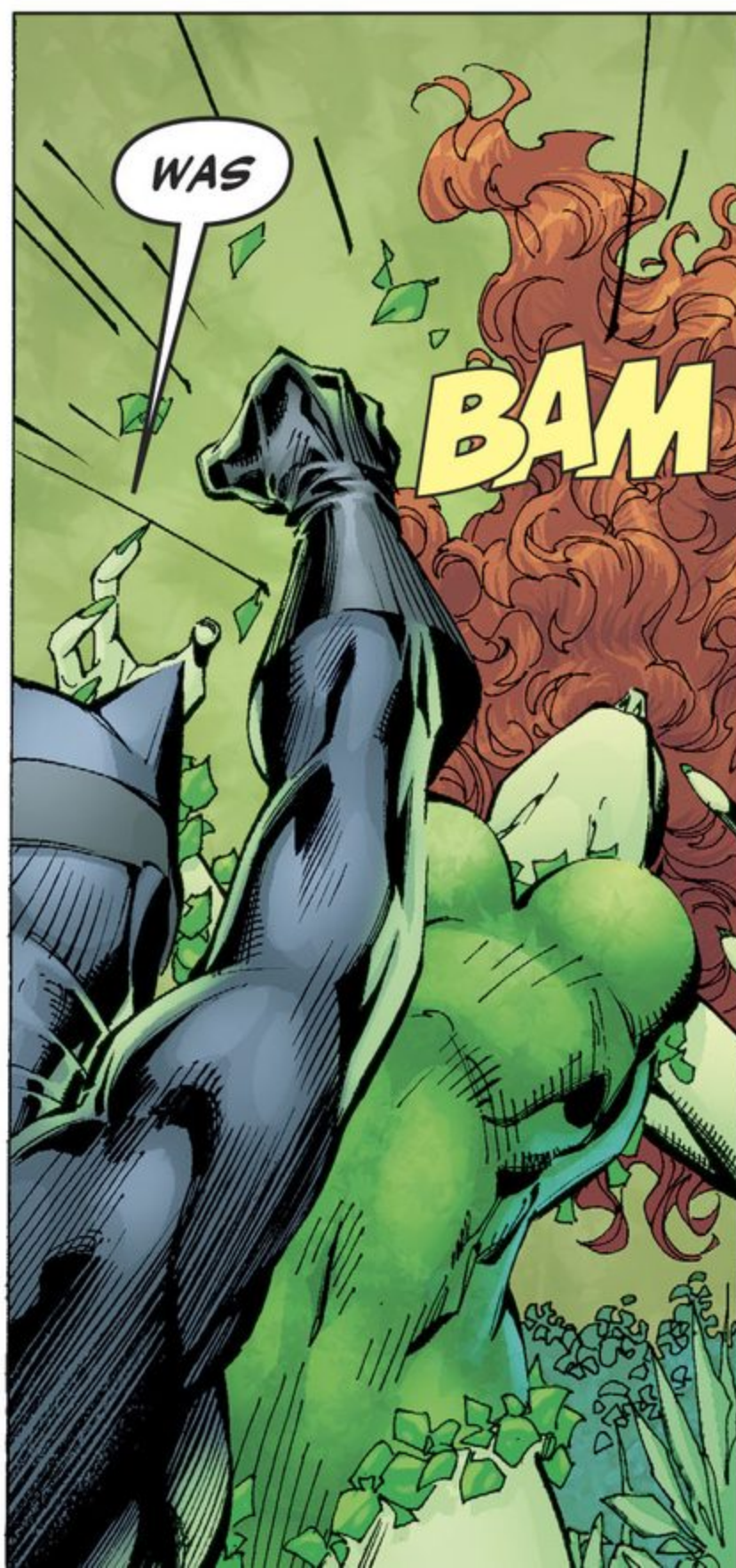
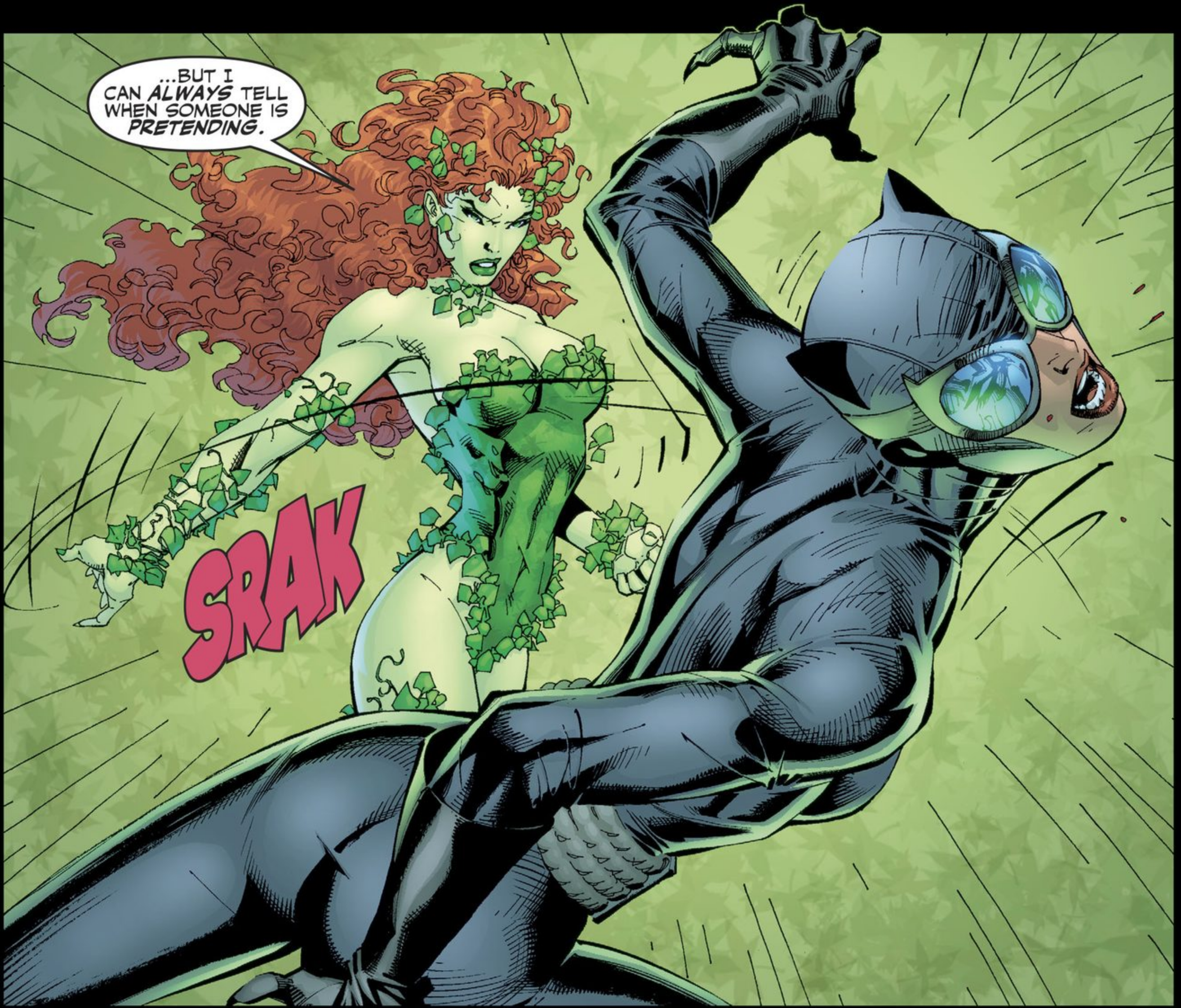
I'VE
COME BACK
TO YOU.

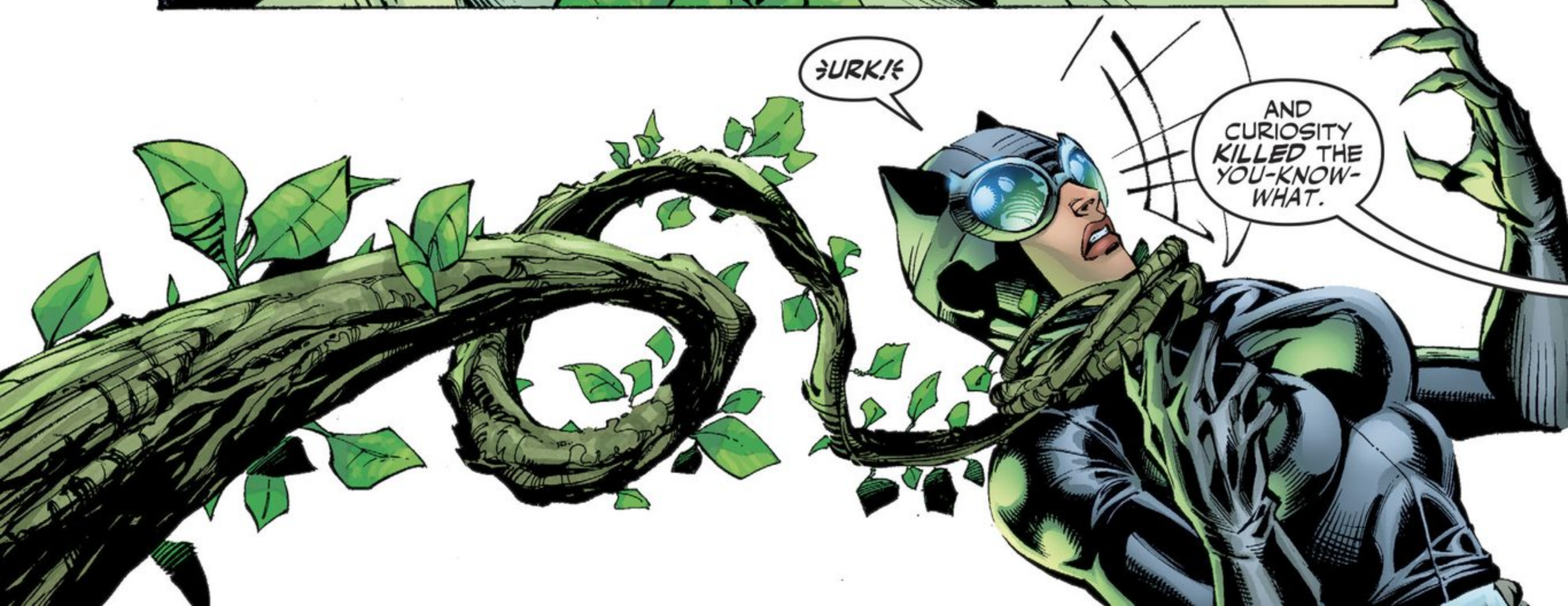
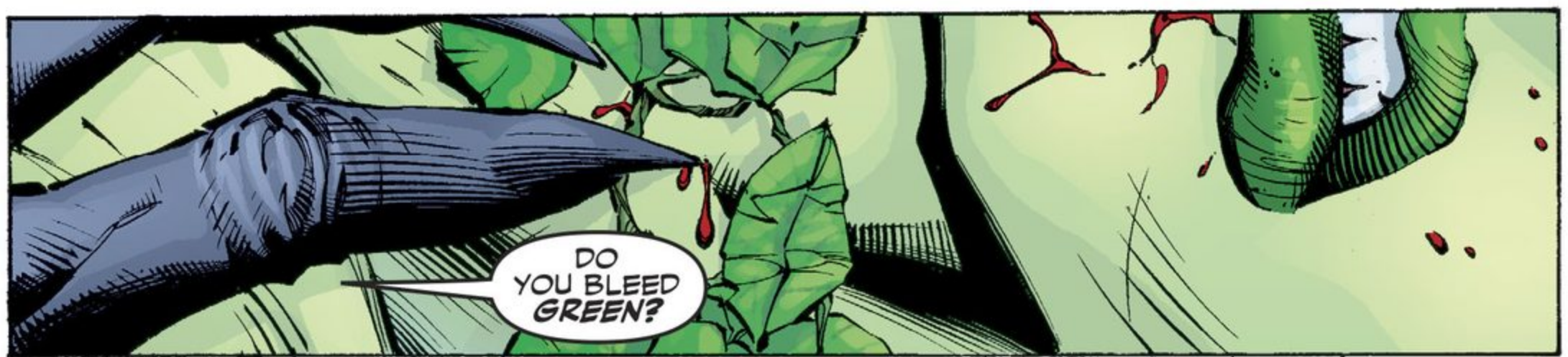
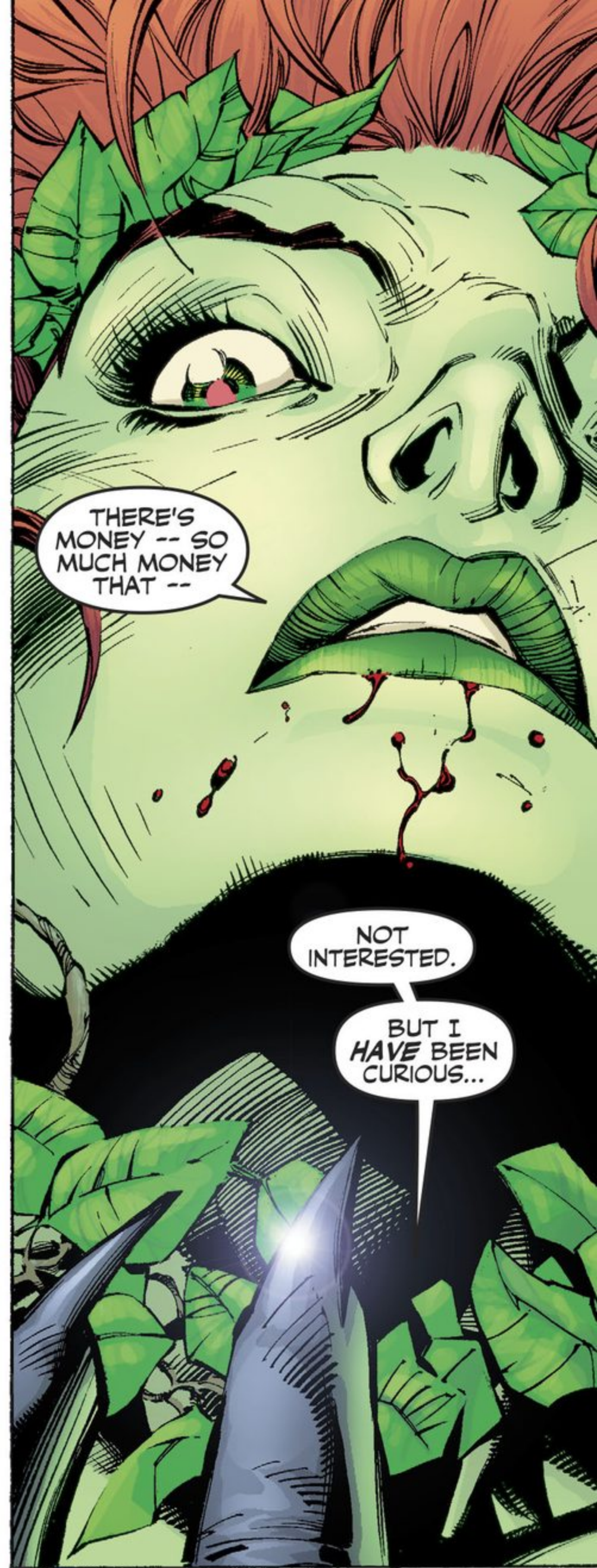
HAVE
YOU?

IT'S
LIKE YOU
SAID --

-- NO ONE
CAN RESIST
YOU.

YESSS...

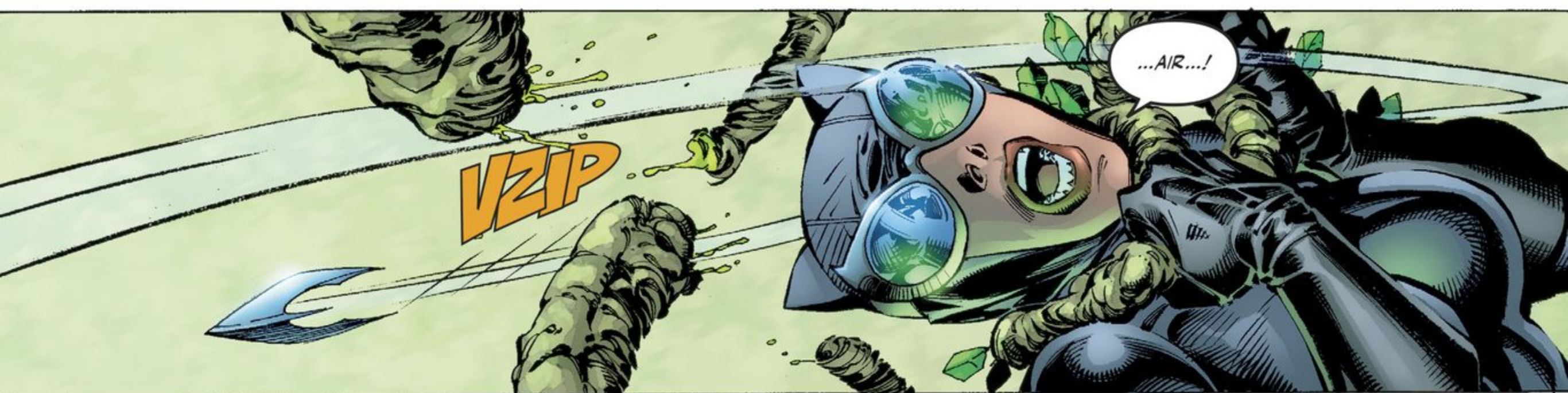






THE PLANTS
DON'T LIKE IT WHEN
YOU TOUCH THEIR
MOTHER --

-- WITCH!



...AIR...!

VZIP



IVY.

YOU ARE
COMING BACK TO
GOTHAM CITY.



WHAT'D YOU DO?
WALK?



SO...THE
KITTEN BROUGHT
A CHAMPION.

GOOD.

I'VE
BROUGHT
MINE, TOO.

THOOM

No.

Not here.

KRRRKK

THASH

Not now.

WHARROON

Not him.

IF YOU COME
NEAR HER --

-- YOU'LL
HAVE TO COME
THROUGH ME.

YOU HEARD
THE MAN.

MY
SUPERMAN.





THE BATTLE



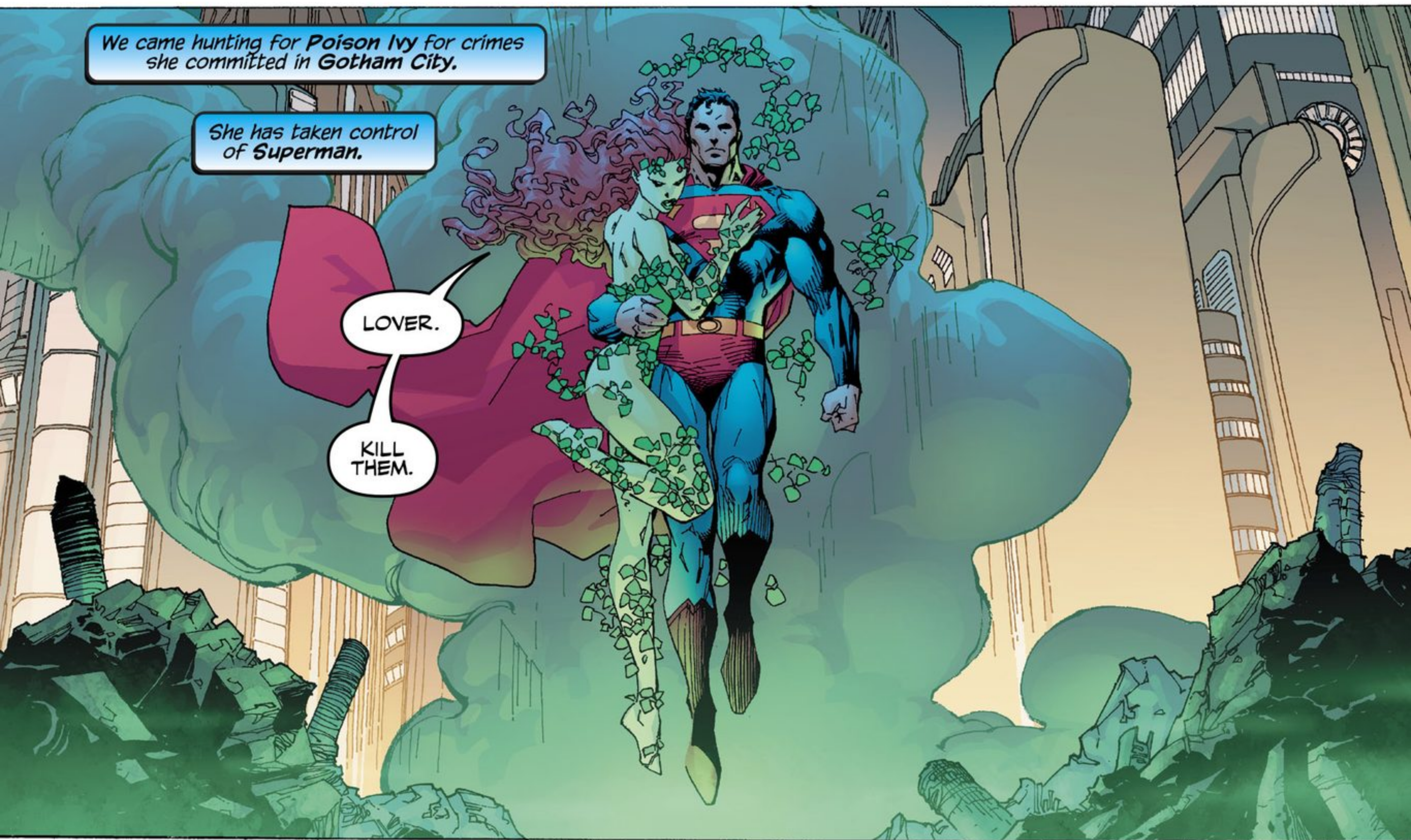


Metropolis.

W-WHAT
HIT US?

HE DID.

I hate this city.



We came hunting for *Poison Ivy* for crimes
she committed in *Gotham City*.

She has taken control
of *Superman*.

LOVER.

KILL
THEM.

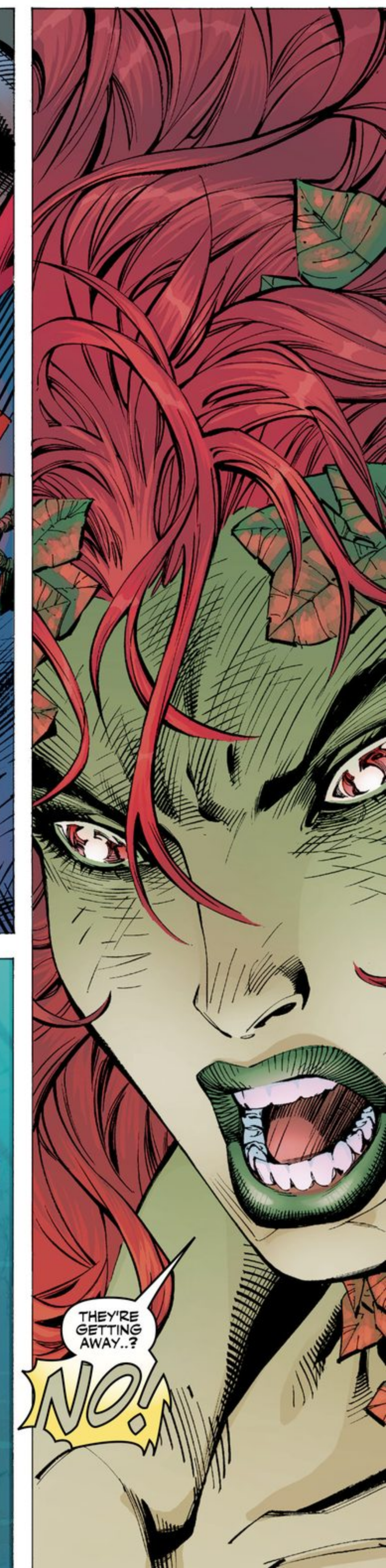


TELL ME
YOU HAVE A
PLAN.

If I know him --
and I do --



--I know what his
next move will be.



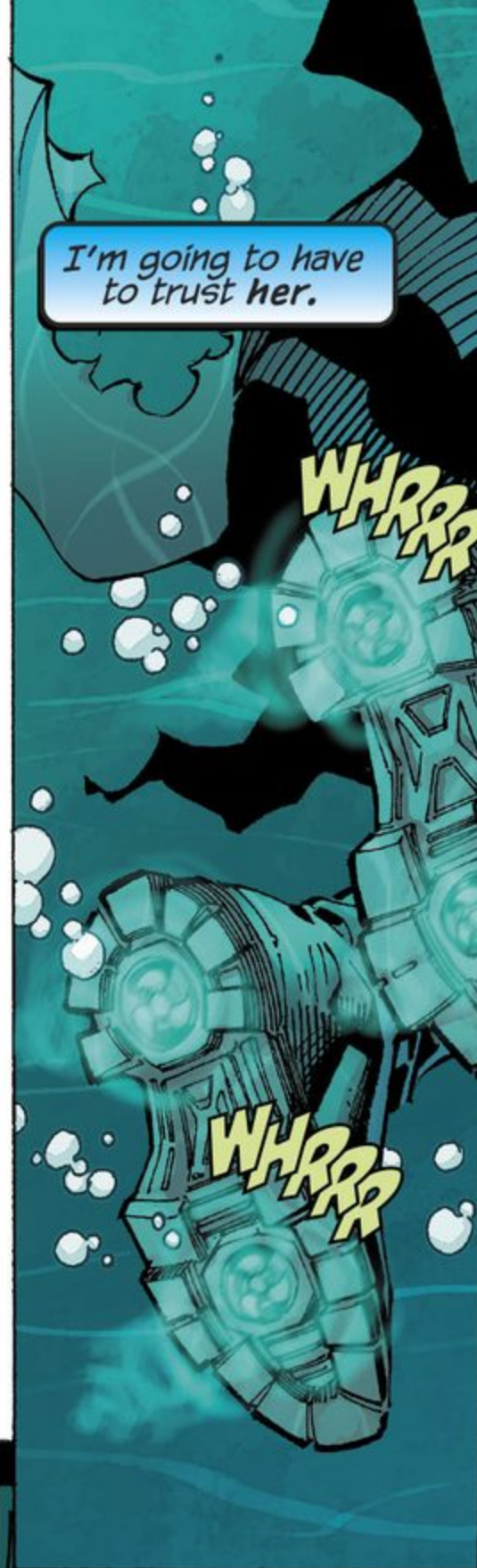


Selina is panicking.
Cats and water.

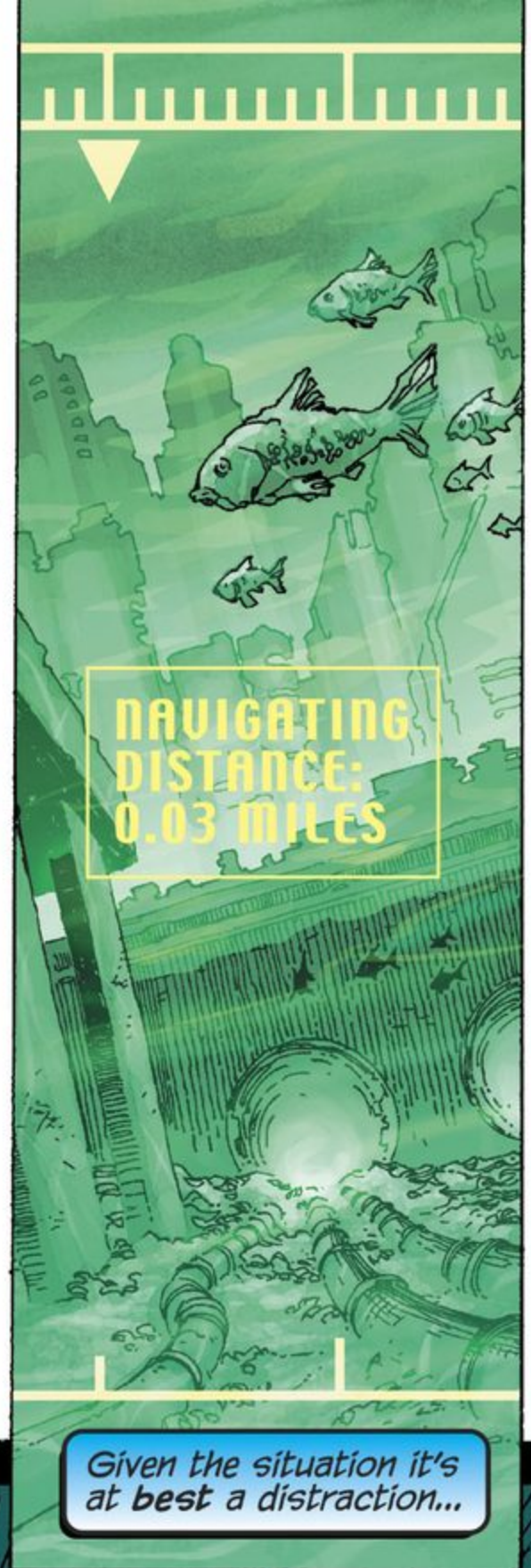


She's going to have
to trust me.

Nightvision
Engaged.



I'm going to have
to trust her.



NAVIGATING
DISTANCE:
0.03 MILES

Given the situation it's
at best a distraction...

...and at the worst,
could get us killed.



Seconds.

Poison Ivy used Catwoman in those Gotham City crimes.

She felt violated being controlled by Ivy.

It's made the hunt personal for Selina.

THOUGHTLESS.

WORTHLESS.

STUPID.

MAN.





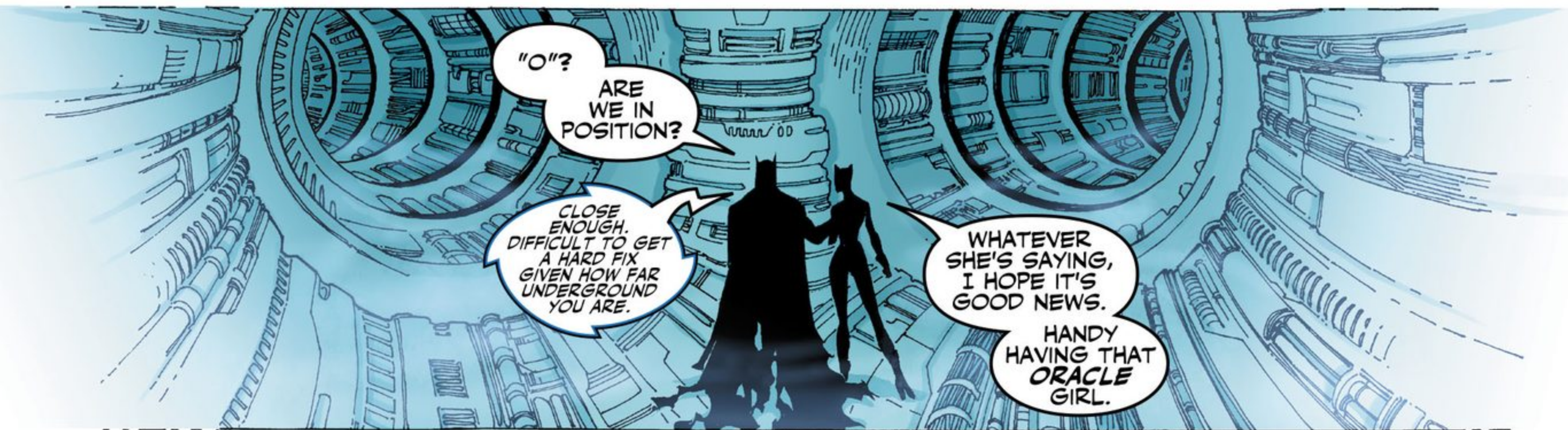
And I... can't let Catwoman's desires impair my judgment.

Despite... what I may be feeling for her...

WE CAN'T OUTRUN HIM.

HE'S FASTER THAN A --

-- WELL, Y'KNOW.



"O"?

ARE WE IN POSITION?

CLOSE ENOUGH. DIFFICULT TO GET A HARD FIX GIVEN HOW FAR UNDERGROUND YOU ARE.

WHATEVER SHE'S SAYING, I HOPE IT'S GOOD NEWS.

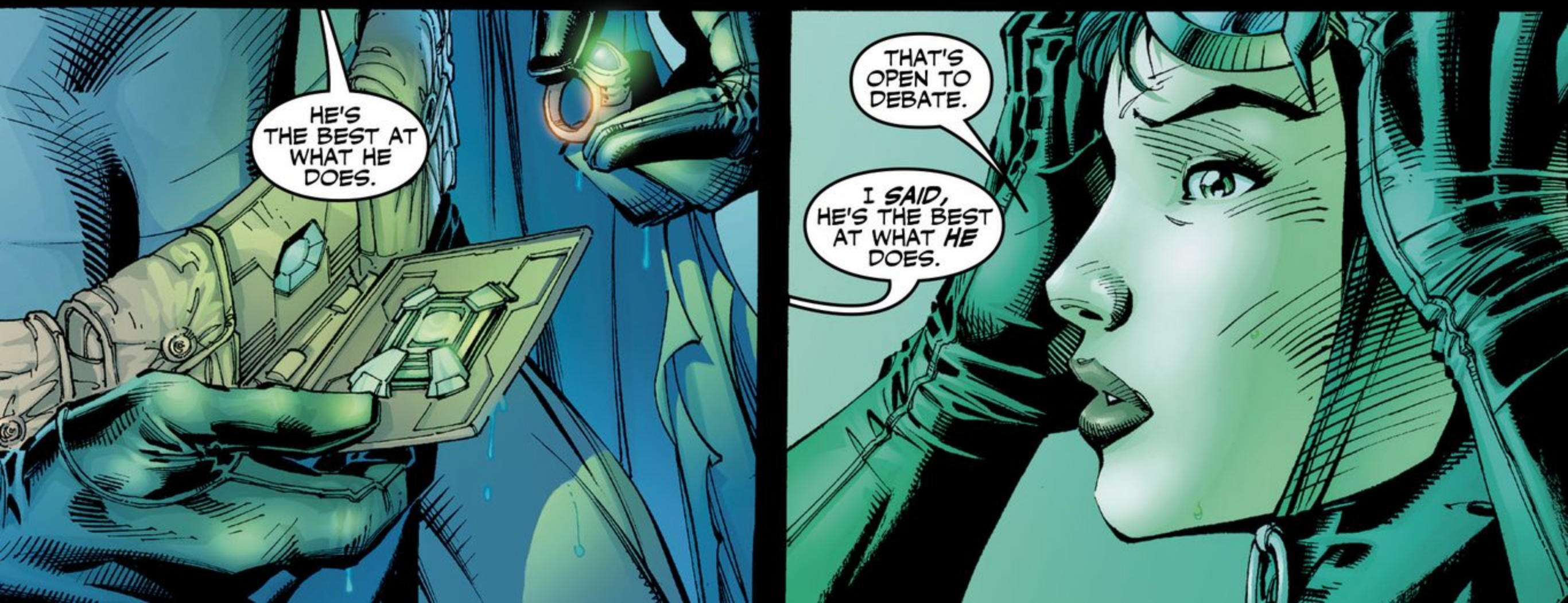
HANDY HAVING THAT ORACLE GIRL.



THE PARASITE ONCE FOUGHT HIM AND USED THESE TUNNELS TO ESCAPE. A LEAD-LINED SEWER SYSTEM COURTESY OF LEXCORP.

HURRAY FOR LEX LUTHOR.

YOU'VE STUDIED SUPERMAN, HAVEN'T YOU?



HE'S THE BEST AT WHAT HE DOES.

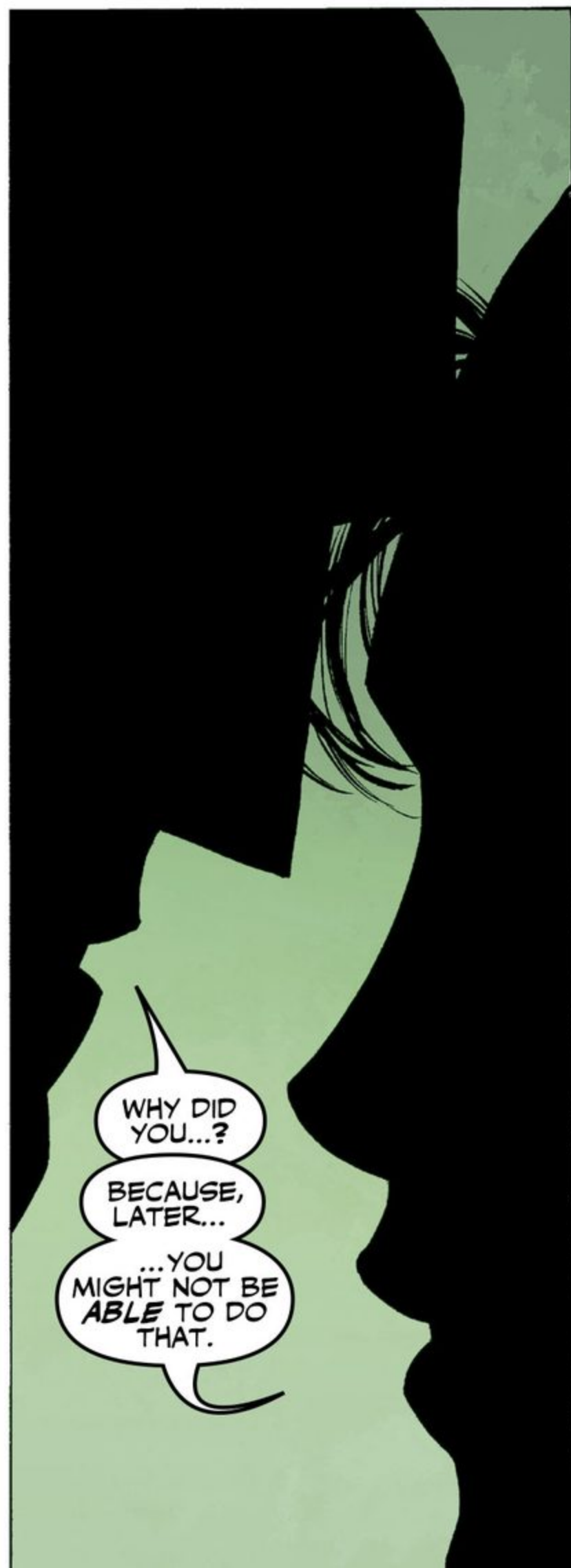
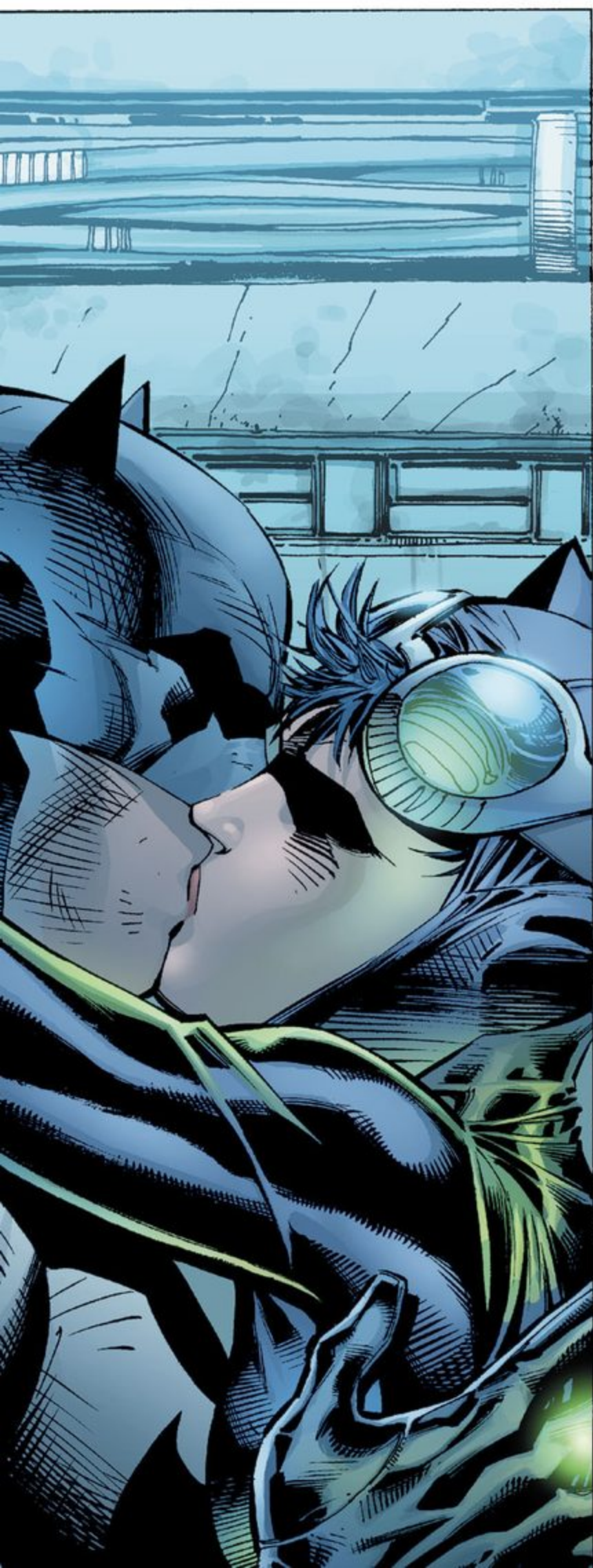
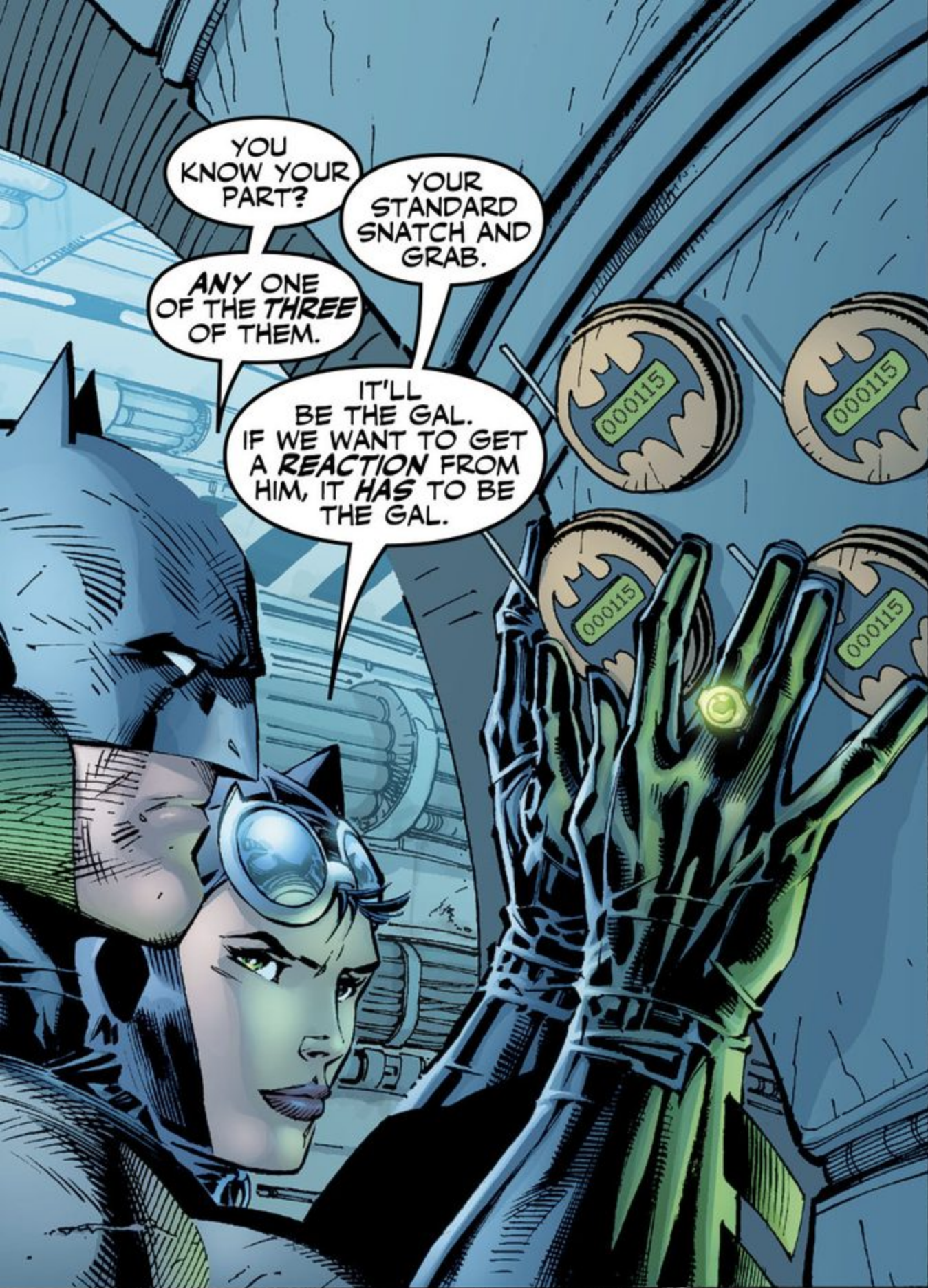
THAT'S OPEN TO DEBATE.

I SAID, HE'S THE BEST AT WHAT HE DOES.



NOT
AT WHAT
I DO.

You don't come to
Metropolis and not
be prepared for him.





*I don't believe
in luck.*

KRAASH

*But if I did... now
would be a good time
to start.*

All at once, I'm ten years old,
looking up in the Metropolis skyline
with Tommy Elliot.

Green Lantern is fighting with
The Icicle and Tommy tells me
The Icicle can't win.

"If you want to beat your opponent, Bruce,
you have to think like your opponent."

DOWN

If Clark wanted to,
he could use his
superspeed and
squish me into
the cement.

But I know how he
thinks. Even more
than the Kryptonite,
he's got one big
weakness.

Deep down, Clark's
essentially a good
person...

...and deep down,
I'm not.

EXPL



I have to keep him contained, so he can't fly.

I yell at him to keep him distracted.

LISTEN TO ME.



The Green K in the ring slows his reflexes.

I'VE OPENED A GAS MAIN. IF YOU SO MUCH AS MAKE A SPARK WITH YOUR HEAT VISION--

--YOU'LL BLOW UP THE ENTIRE BLOCK.

WAM



IF I hit him again, I'll shatter every bone in *my* hand. The Kevlar only protects so much.

AND YOU *KNOW* WHAT BUILDING WE'RE UNDER.

BTAM



Time to switch to hypersonics.

I can't hear them -- but he -- and any dog in the surrounding area -- is going to have a splitting headache in the morning.



ENOUGH.

Arctic breath. He's holding back as much as he can...



...and I have to keep the pressure on.

POP

POP

POP

KLIK

Next. Blind him.



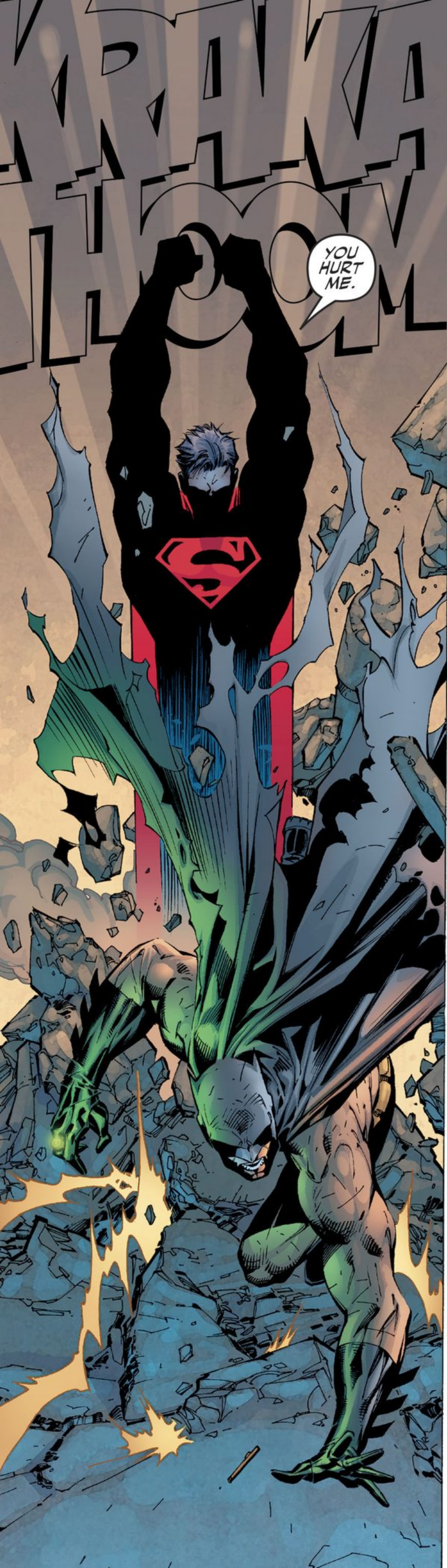
Now, it's all about timing.



Not easy to do when your opponent is faster than a... well, you know.

CLARK. ABOUT THE GAS MAIN--







If we had to, Catwoman could catch her...





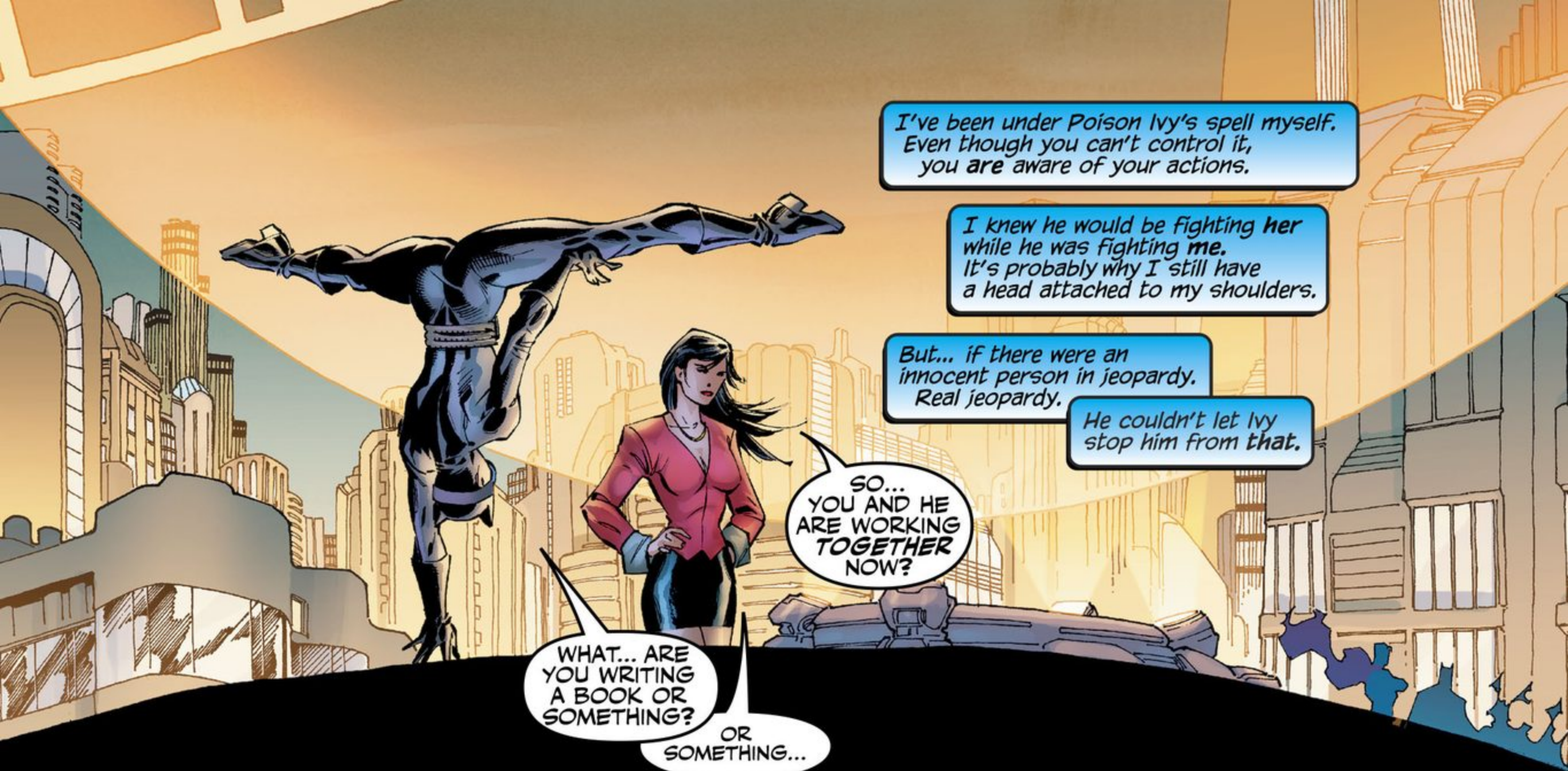
...but we don't have to.

I'VE GOT YOU.

HI, HONEY, YOU'RE HOME.

CLARK.
NO OFFENSE---
-- BUT YOU LOOK LIKE HELL.

He's the best at what he does...



I've been under Poison Ivy's spell myself. Even though you can't control it, you are aware of your actions.

I knew he would be fighting her while he was fighting me. It's probably why I still have a head attached to my shoulders.

But... if there were an innocent person in jeopardy. Real jeopardy.

He couldn't let Ivy stop him from that.

SO... YOU AND HE ARE WORKING TOGETHER NOW?

WHAT... ARE YOU WRITING A BOOK OR SOMETHING?

OR SOMETHING...



IVY WILL BE ON THE MOVE. SHE HAS MONEY AND A CERTAIN WAY WITH ANYONE WHO WOULD STOP HER.

AND SHE HAS HELP. SMART. CONNECTED.

SOMEONE WHO GOT HER THE *SYNTHETIC GREEN K* IN HER LIPSTICK TO BE ABLE TO CONTROL YOU.

ANY IDEAS ON WHO THAT MIGHT BE?

WORKING ON IT.

WE SHOULD HAVE A WORD OR TWO WITH IVY.

I'M NOT SURE *EITHER* ONE OF US COULD FIND HER IN TIME.

BUT WE BOTH KNOW *SOMEONE* WHO CAN.

AND I THINK I HAVE A CHANGE OF CLOTHES UP AT THE *FORTRESS*, TOO...

PLINK



The Metropolis Plaza.
Tommy and I stayed
here as kids.



PUT
THE MONEY
DOWN.



YOU'RE
GOING BACK TO
GOTHAM CITY.

LIKE
HELL I--



I'VE ALREADY
CALLED MY OLD FRIEND
MAGGIE SAWYER.

--AM.

SHE'S
ARRANGED FOR
THE METROPOLIS
S.C.U. TO DELIVER
YOU TO THE
G.C.P.D.



I DON'T
KNOW HOW
YOU FOUND ME,
BUT --

Sometimes all the detective work in the world can't beat a super-dog with a keen sense of smell.

GHRRRR



RRR



HELLO, IVY.

DOK

GOOD-BYE, IVY.



CATWOMAN.
WAS
THAT REALLY
NECESSARY?



YES.



It is time to leave this city.
But not before Clark has his say.

DON'T
EVEN THINK
ABOUT IT,
DOG.

HOW DID
CATWOMAN KNOW
TO PICK *LOIS*?
YOU DIDN'T...

I ONLY TOLD
HER THAT YOU CARE
ABOUT THE PEOPLE
WHO WORK AT
THE DAILY PLANET.

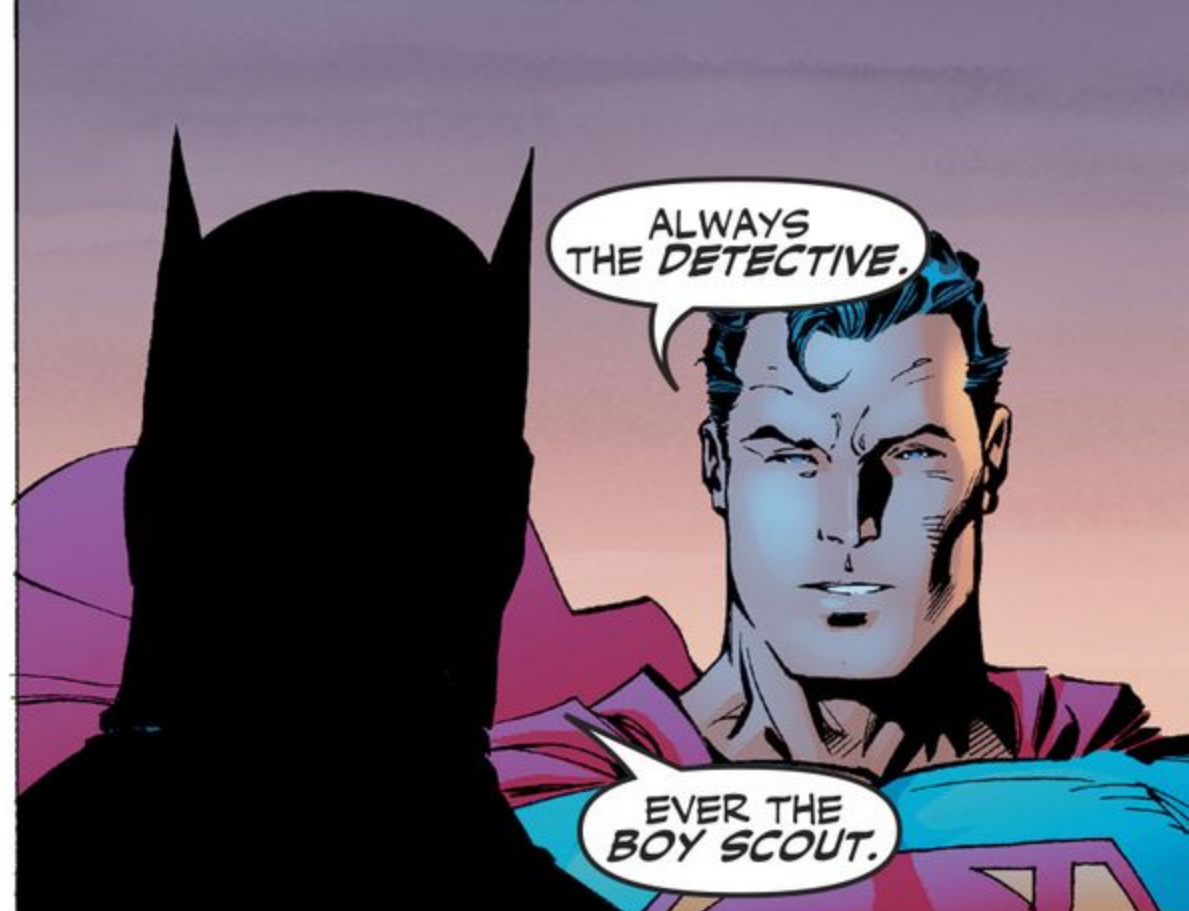
SHE HAD
THREE CHOICES.
LOIS. JIMMY OLSEN.
OR EVEN
PERRY WHITE.

CATWOMAN
PICKED LOIS.

YOU COULD
HAVE GOTTEN
LOIS KILLED.

NO.

I BELIEVED
IN YOU.







THE OPERA



The Gotham City Opera House.

I should be on patrol.

INDEED, MASTER BRUCE, CAVORTING AROUND IN YOUR PAJAMAS IS FAR MORE IMPORTANT THAN SUPPORTING A WORTHY CAUSE.

DID I SAY SOMETHING, ALFRED?

NO, BUT YOU WERE THINKING IT.

I have an unknown antagonist. Someone who has studied me.

And has studied my enemies, teaching them new methods.



I'VE PACKED YOUR BELONGINGS.

DO TRY TO MAKE IT AT LEAST UNTIL THE INTERMISSION.

ANYTHING ELSE...?

LUCIUS FOX WISHES TO SPEAK WITH YOU REGARDING WAYNE TECH BUSINESS--

-- THAT CAN WAIT.

AND SELINA KYLE WILL BE JOINING YOU THIS EVENING.

I TAKE IT THEN THAT THAT WILL NOT WAIT.

My interrogations of Killer Croc, while he was in custody in Gotham, and Poison Ivy have produced little or nothing with regard to my opponent's identity.



It isn't just their silence that I find frustrating. It's the way they are being silent.

SEEN ENOUGH? OR SHOULD I SEND YOU THE CATALOGUE?

As if...

...they were being instructed to do so.



BRUCE! REALLY GLAD YOU COULD MAKE IT.

ARE YOU KIDDING, TOMMY? ANY BENEFIT FOR LESLIE AND I'D BE THERE, EVEN IF MY DOCTOR ORDERED ME OTHERWISE.

HA! TONIGHT I'LL MAKE AN EXCEPTION.

GOOD WORK SHOULD BE REWARDED. ESPECIALLY IN THIS CITY.

I DIDN'T REALIZE THAT YOU KNEW ABOUT THE PARK ROW CLINIC.

NOW IF YOU LADIES WILL JOIN US, OUR OPERA BOX AWAITS.

HELLO, LESLIE.

SELINA! YOU LOOK... GRAND.

There is only one thing about my new adversary that I am certain of. He or she has only begun.



The Opera.

Oddly enough, it was my father's passion and not my mother's.

THAT'S IT. BRUCE AND SELINA, AND LESLIE, I'LL SIT WITH YOU. BOY, GIRL, BOY GIRL.

While my father chafed at the idea of literature and cinema being introduced into my life courtesy of my mother --

"What's the use of filling the boy's head with useless imaginary things?" he was apt to say --

-- he had no such reservations when it came to the works of Verdi, Puccinni, and especially, Leoncavallo.



There was something about the Opera -- how they often ended in tragedy -- that my father found appealing...

I DON'T. ONLY BY REPUTATION. CERTAINLY NOT WELL ENOUGH TO CALL HIM "TOMMY."

A CHILDHOOD NICKNAME. THEN, HOW DID --

-- I GET INVITED? LESLIE AND I ARE OLD FRIENDS. I'M HER DATE.

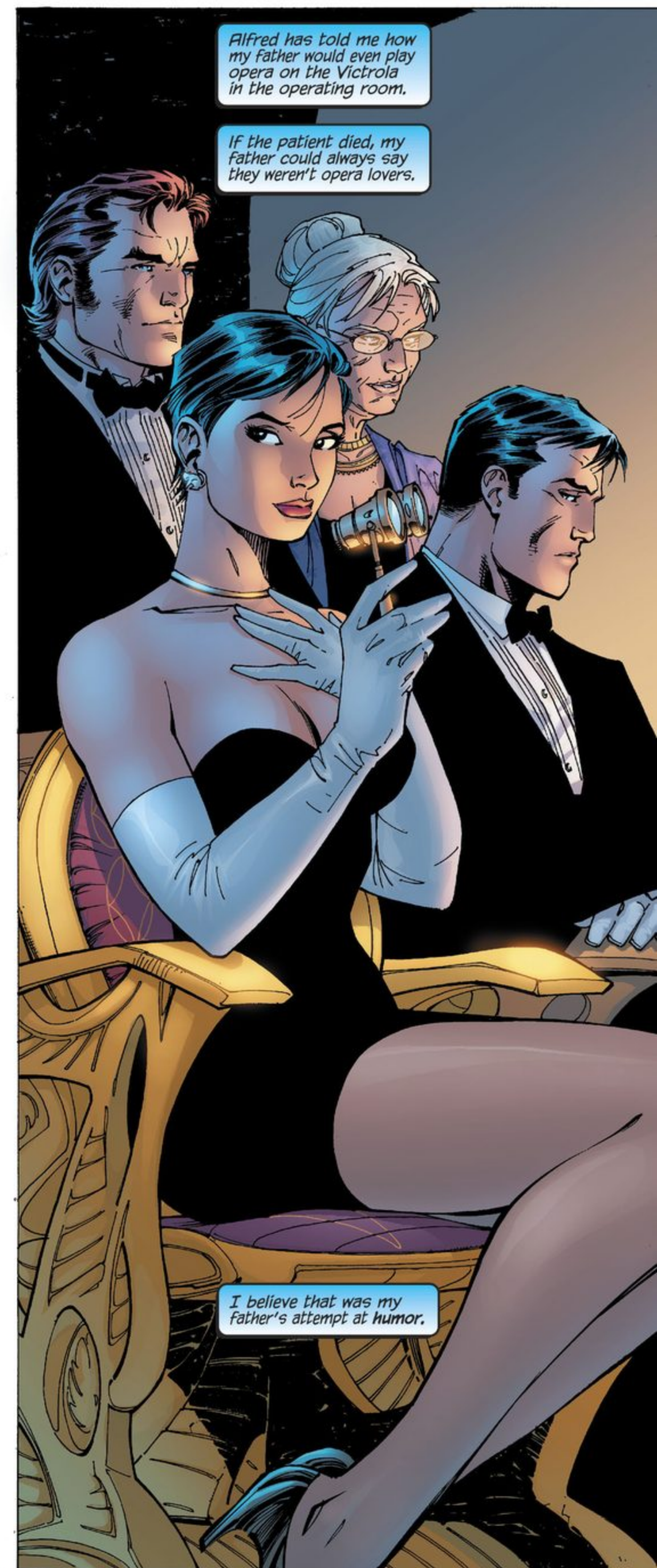
HOW LONG HAVE YOU KNOWN TOMMY ELLIOT?



HUSH, YOU TWO! IT'S STARTING. I DON'T WANT TO HAVE TO SEPARATE YOU.

OH, THOMAS --

WELL, I DON'T...!



Alfred has told me how my father would even play opera on the Victrola in the operating room.

If the patient died, my father could always say they weren't opera lovers.

I believe that was my father's attempt at humor.

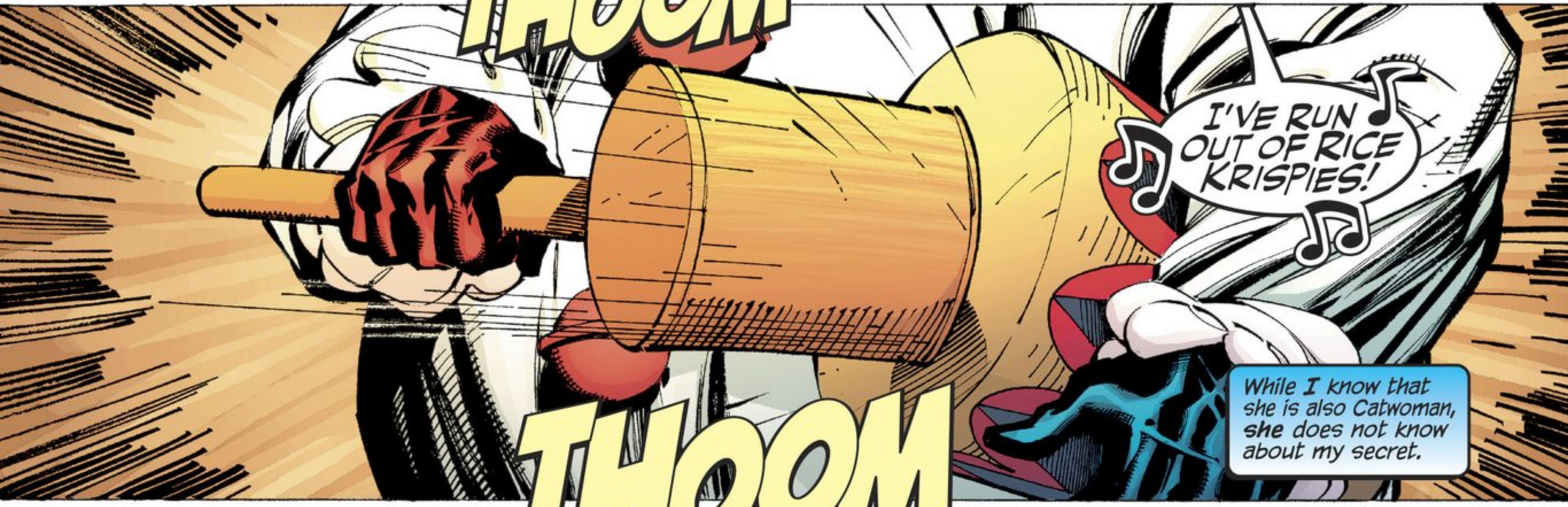


RIDI
PAGLIACCIO--

The evening is made only more complicated by the inclusion of Selina Kyle.

THOOM

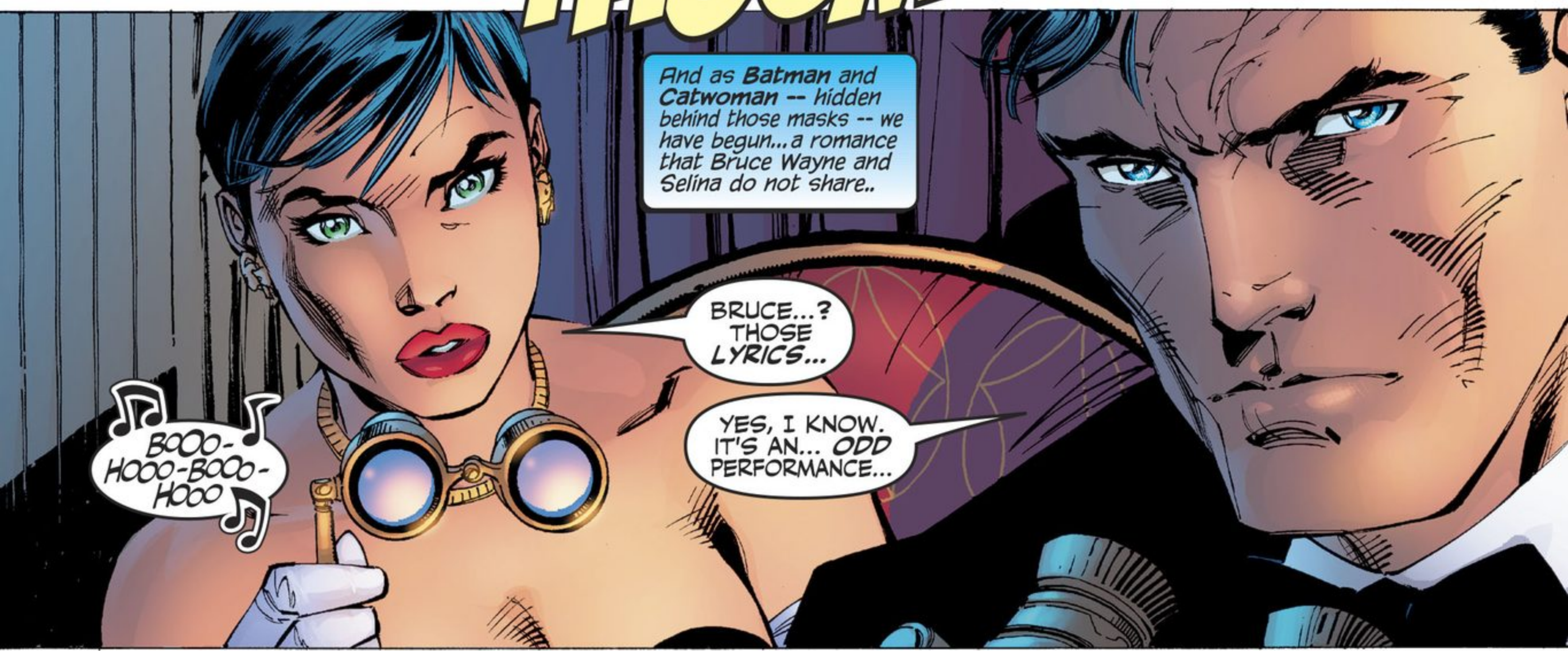
THOOM



I'VE RUN
OUT OF RICE
KRISPIES!

While I know that she is also Catwoman, she does not know about my secret.

THOOM



And as Batman and Catwoman -- hidden behind those masks -- we have begun... a romance that Bruce Wayne and Selina do not share..

BOOO-
HOOO-BOOO-
HOOO

BRUCE...?
THOSE
LYRICS...

YES, I KNOW.
IT'S AN... ODD
PERFORMANCE...



RRRRIP

HA-HA-
HA-HEE-HEE-
WOWEY!

RRRRIP

We are... "The stuff of great opera," Alfred has commented.

A full-page comic book illustration. Harley Quinn is the central figure, standing on a rooftop. She is wearing her iconic red and blue jester-style bodysuit with diamond patterns, a white collar, and a jester's hat with two pom-poms. She is holding a large, ornate silver revolver in her right hand, pointing it upwards. Her expression is one of manicured madness, with a wide, toothy grin. The background shows a cityscape with stone buildings under a bright, hazy sky. In the foreground, the heads and shoulders of several other characters are visible, looking up at Harley. One man has a blue and purple face, another has blonde hair and a blue face, and a woman with blonde hair and glasses is on the right. A speech bubble from Harley and a text box with her name are also present.

Chapter Six
THE OPERA

OPERA,
SCHMOPERA!

Harley Quinn.
The Joker's girlfriend.



LADIES AND JERKS! THERE'S BEEN A SLIGHT CHANGE IN TONIGHT'S SHOW.

INSTEAD THE OPERA ROBBIN' YOU FOR SOMETHIN' LIKE A THOUSAND BUCKS A SEAT--

--WE'RE GONNA ROB YOU!

BELIEVE ME, FOLKS, I'VE SEEN IT ALREADY. I'M DOIN' YA A **BIG** FAVOR!

THIS IS **OUTRAGEOUS**. I'M CALLING THE POLICE--

DON'TCHA HATE THIS?

YER TRYIN' TO HAVE A NICE NIGHT ON THE TOWN--

-- AND SOME PEANUT BRAIN FERGETS TA TURN OFF ALL CELL PHONES AND PAGERS DURING THE PERFORMANCE!

SMASH

My sources had her working out of Metropolis of late, teamed with...

...Poison Ivy.

And with Ivy's capture in Metropolis and subsequent deportation back to Gotham City...



...the lamb was sure to follow.

WELL, IF IT AIN'T ZILLIONAIRE **BRUCE WAYNE**??!

DON'T TELL ANYBODY, BUT I GET ALL GOOSEBUMPILLY WHEN I'M ROBBIN' THE RICH AND FAMOUS.



HEY, YOU LOOK AWFULLY **FAMILIYA**, SISTER.

YOU EVER SPEND ANY TIME UP AT **ARKHAM ASYLUM**?

NO.

TOO BAD. YOU'DA BEEN **VERY POPULAR**.



PLEASE. TAKE WHATEVER YOU WANT. JUST DON'T HURT ANYONE.

YEAH. YEAH. BLAH. BLAH.

YER KIDDIN', RIGHT?

I AIN'T BARGAIN HUNTIN', LADY!

NOW, LET'S SEE WHAT WE GOT HERE, MISTER GONNA-DROP-A-DIME-ON-ME.

DON'T YOU DARE--

LISTEN TO YA. LIKE YOU GOT A **CHOICE!**

OOO. PRETTY.

I recognize that piece. It was a gift from Tommy's mother.



WHAT IS IT,
TOMMY?

MY MOM
GAVE IT TO
ME, BRUCE.
IT'S A CIRCLE.
THAT MEANS LIFE
GOES ON, OR
SOMETHING
LIKE THAT.



IT
LOOKS LIKE
A LIFE SAVER!
I'M GOING TO
SWALLOW
IT!



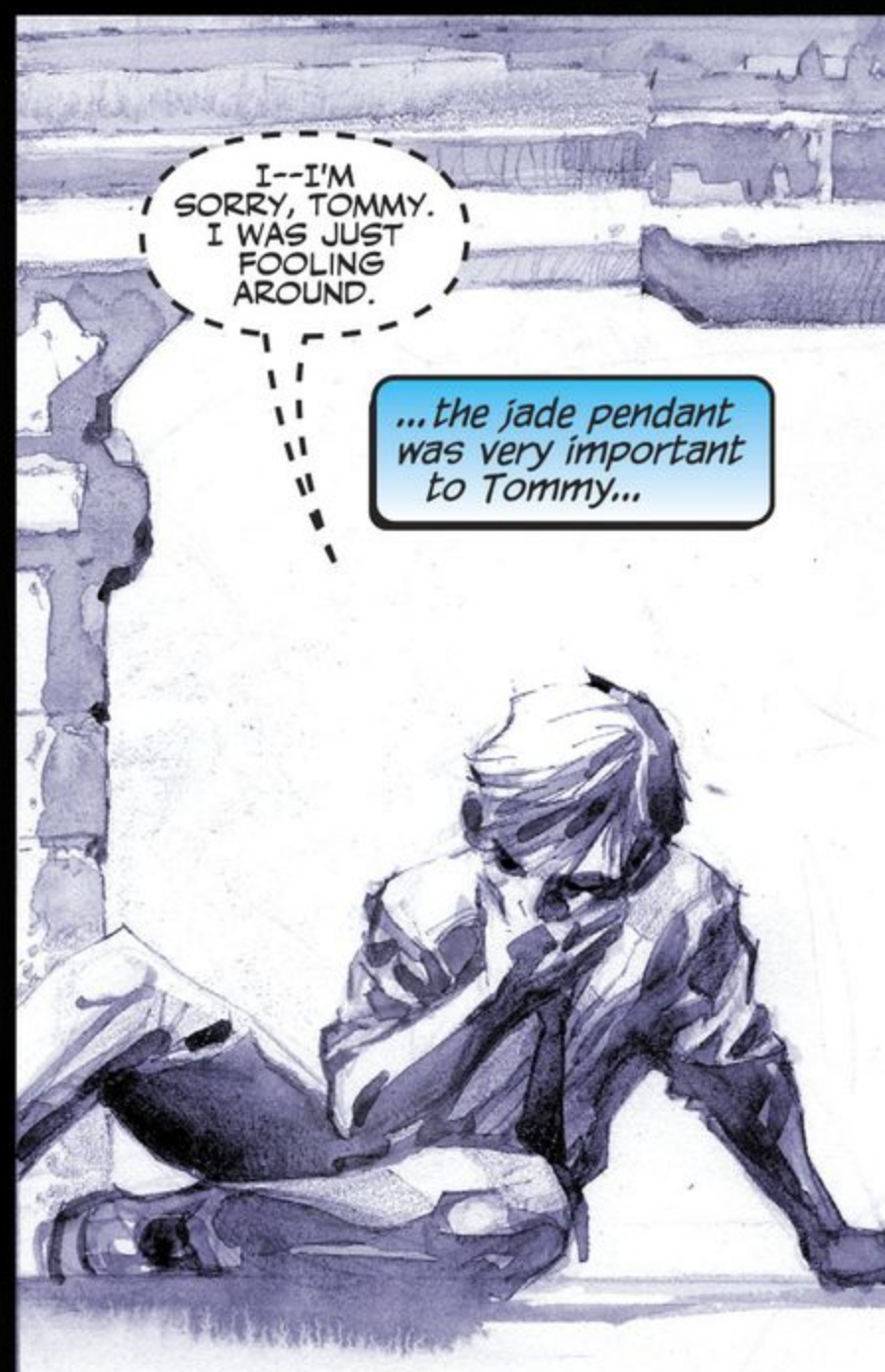
GIVE IT
BACK!



GIVE IT
BACK, BRUCE,
OR I'LL HURT
YOU SO
BAD --

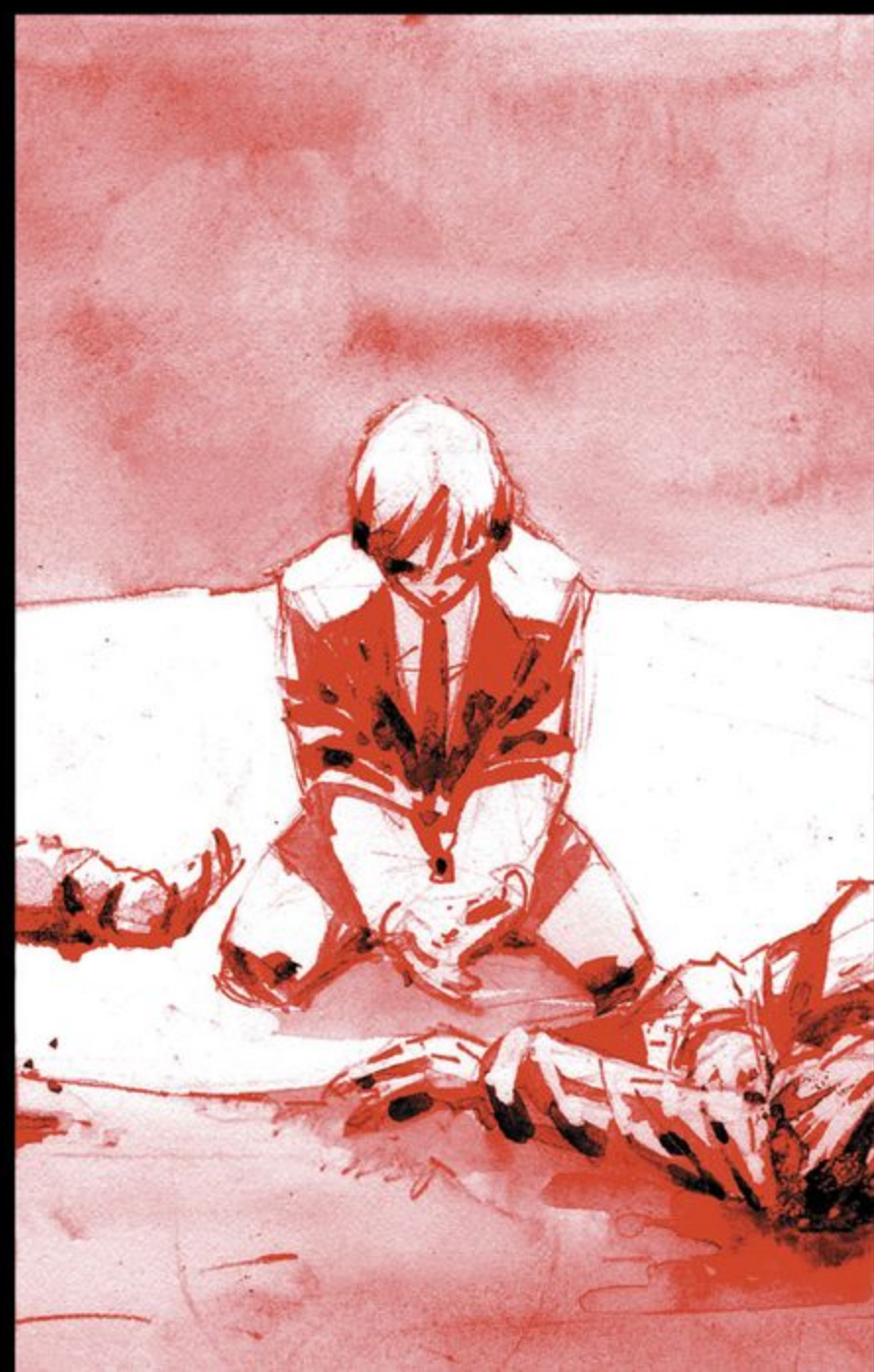
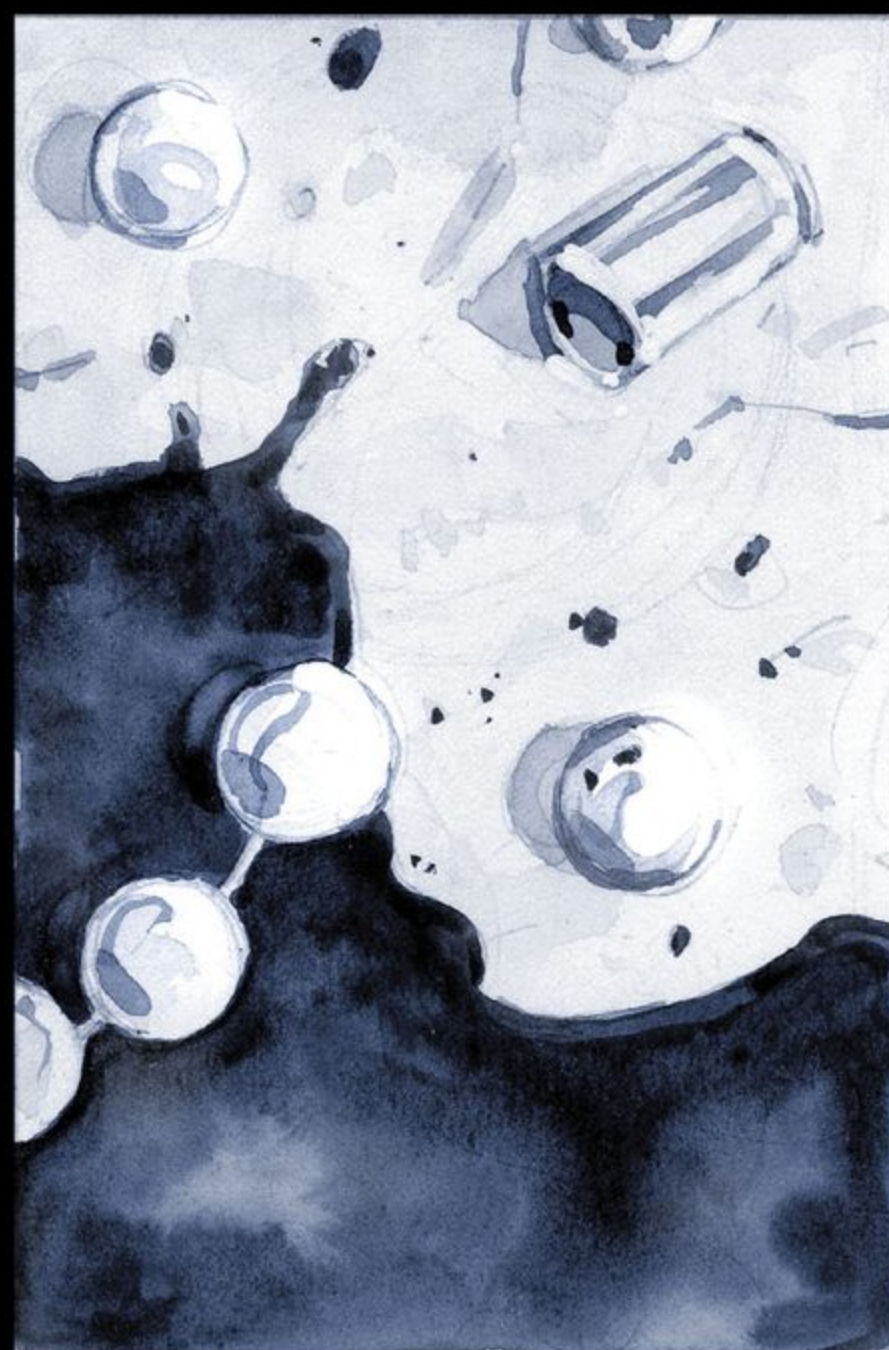


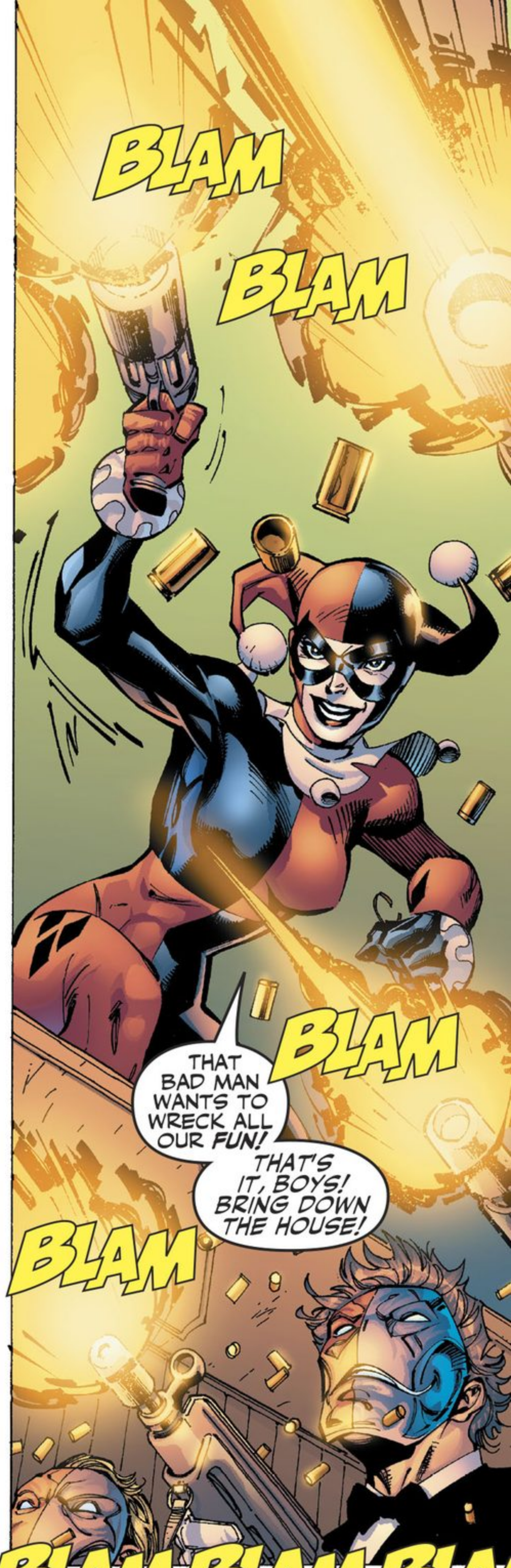
HERE!
TAKE IT!



I--I'M
SORRY, TOMMY.
I WAS JUST
FOOLING
AROUND.

...the jade pendant
was very important
to Tommy...





BLAM BLAM BLAM BLAM BLAM BLAM BLAM

Once again, my enemies overstep their customary boundaries.

Harley has never tried something this... big.



DOCTOR ELLIOT!
GET DOWN,
YOU IDIOT!

I KNOW
WHAT I'M
DOING!

**BLAM
BLAM**

BLAM

BLAMBLAMBLAMBLAM

NO ONE
TAKES FROM
ME. NO ONE.

BLAMBLAMBLAMBLAM

BRUCE!
TELL YOUR
FRIEND--

--BRUCE..?

I THINK
HE WENT OFF
TO FIND HELP.

MEN!

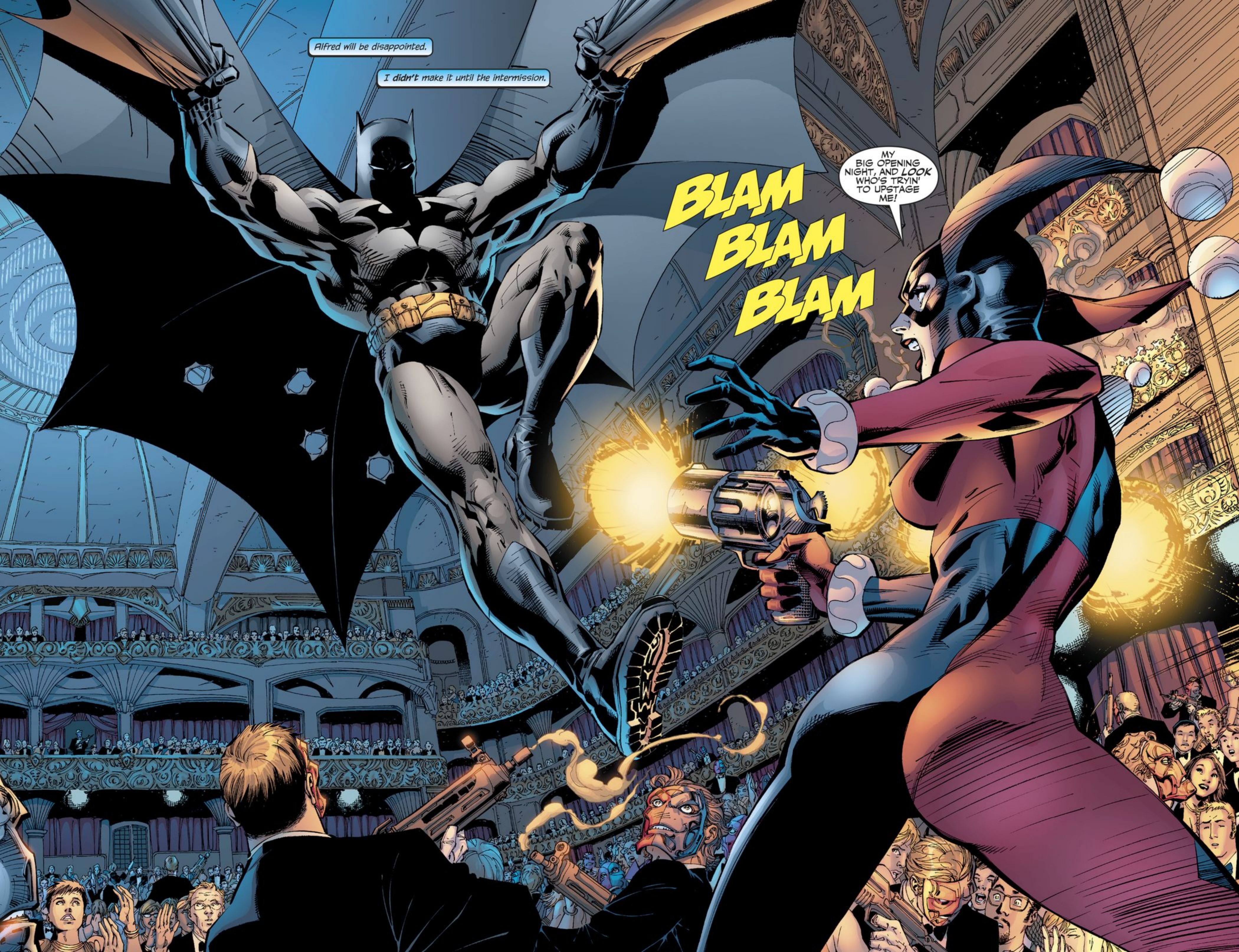
WELL,
YOU'RE NOT
GOING TO LET
THEM HAVE ALL
THE FUN, ARE
YOU?

LESLIE,
I CAN'T LEAVE
YOU--

OH,
POSH. I'VE
BEEN THROUGH
WORSE.

NOW,
I'M SURE
YOU'VE GOT
SOMETHING
IN THAT BLACK
BAG OF YOURS
BESIDES YOUR
WALLET AND
LIPSTICK--

--SO,
DON'T YOU
LET ANYBODY
GET HURT.



Alfred will be disappointed.

I didn't make it until the intermission.

**BLAM
BLAM
BLAM**

MY
BIG
OPENING
NIGHT, AND LOOK
WHO'S TRYIN'
TO UPSTAGE
ME!



My first responsibility is the safety of the patrons.

BLAM

BLAM

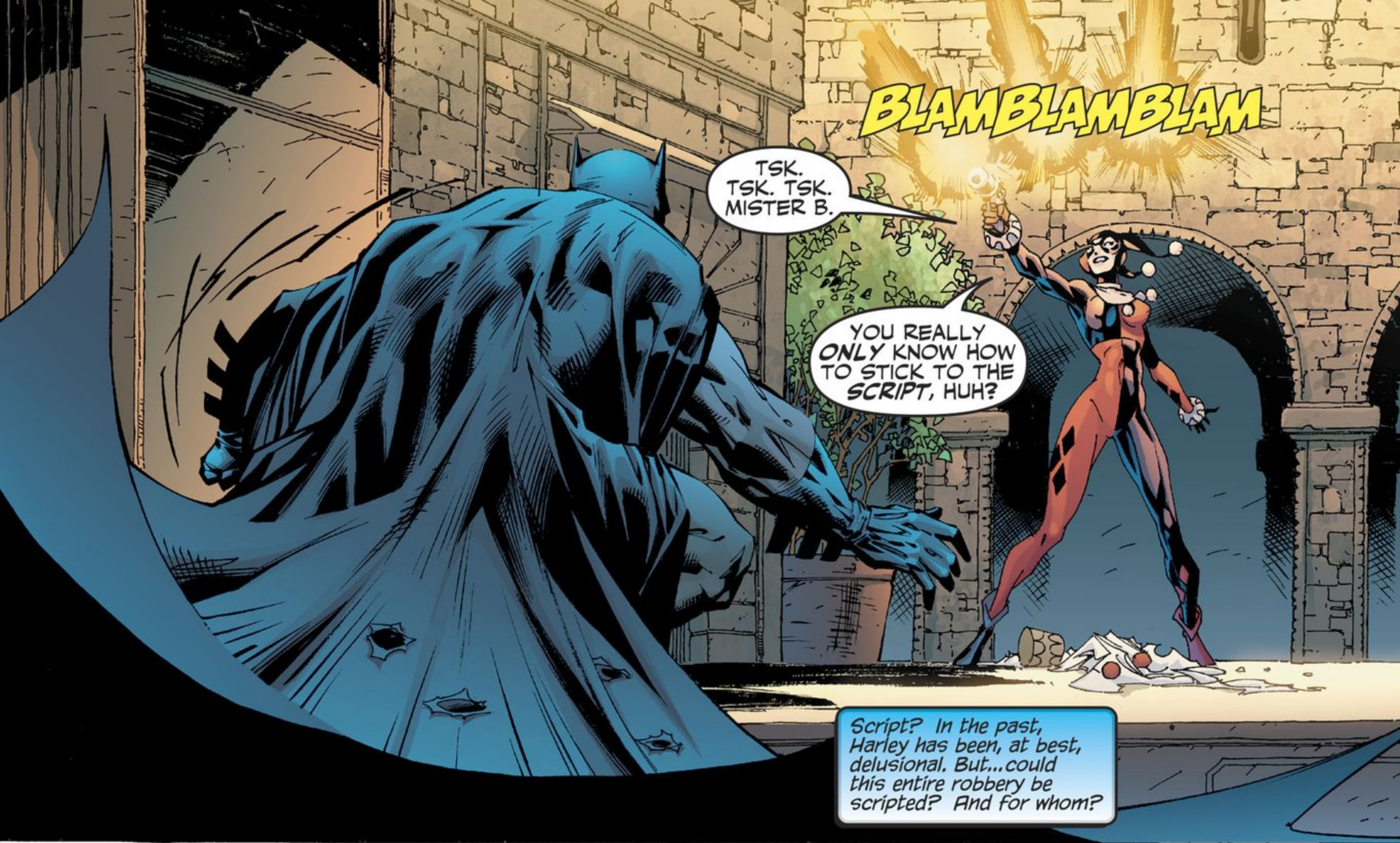
BLAM



As long as the gunmen remain in the orchestra pit, I can keep this contained.

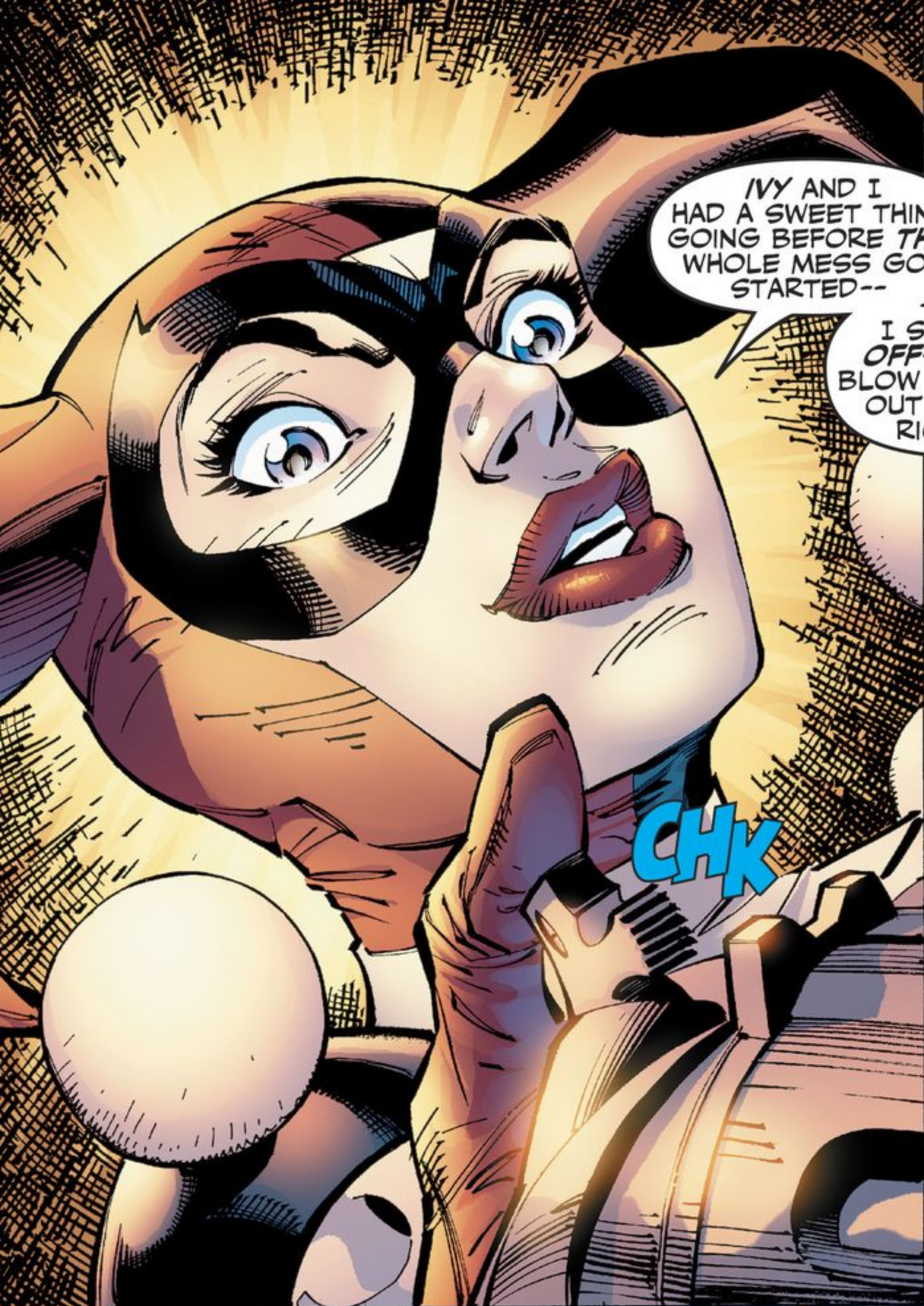


Mace. Smoke. Flash grenades. Batarangs.



Script? In the past, Harley has been, at best, delusional. But...could this entire robbery be scripted? And for whom?

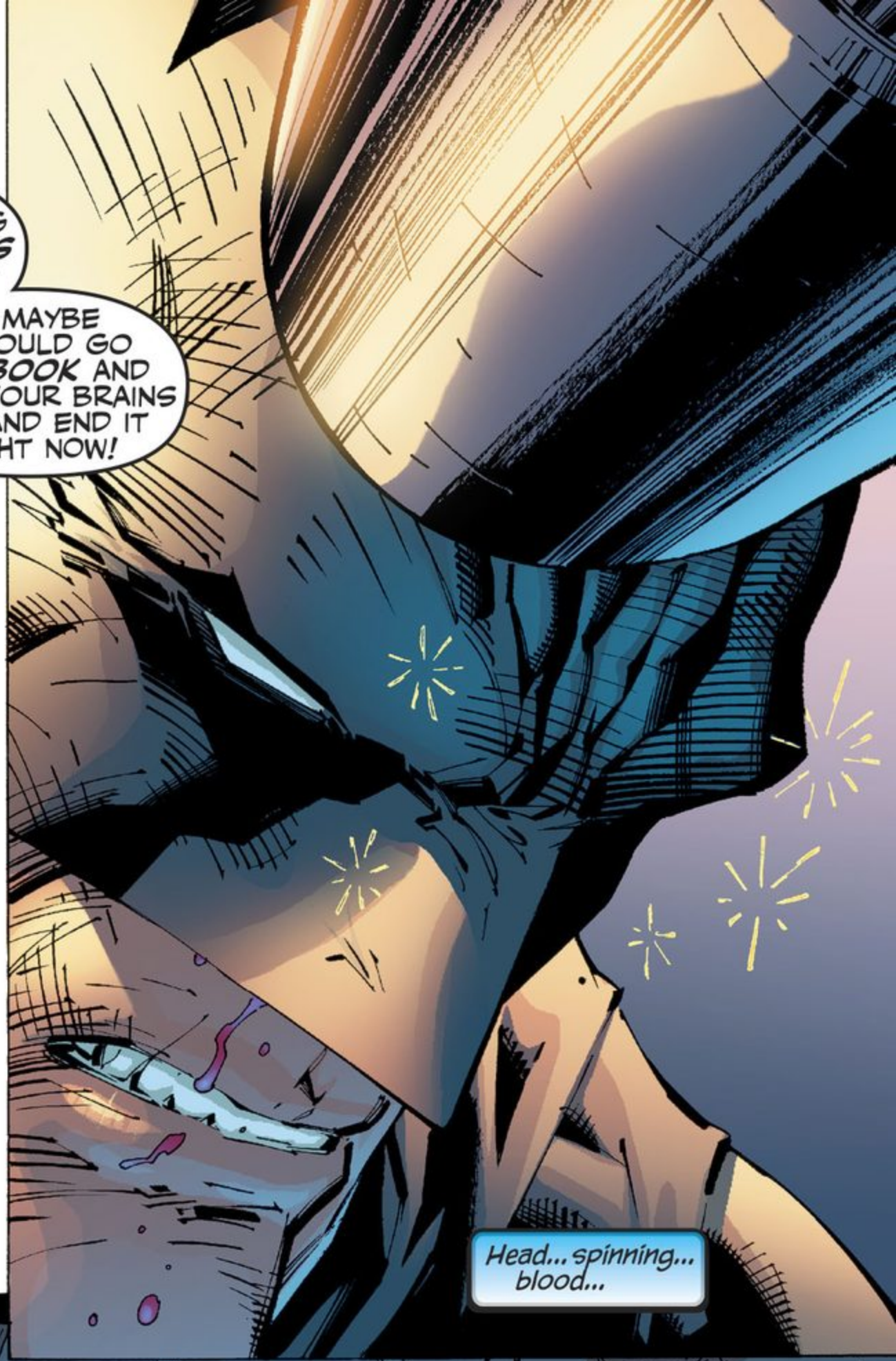




IVY AND I
HAD A SWEET THING
GOING BEFORE *THIS*
WHOLE MESS GOT
STARTED--

--MAYBE
I SHOULD GO
OFF-BOOK AND
BLOW YOUR BRAINS
OUT AND END IT
RIGHT NOW!

CHK



Head... spinning...
blood...



BADLY
CONCEIVED.

BADLY
ACTED.

BADLY
STAGED.

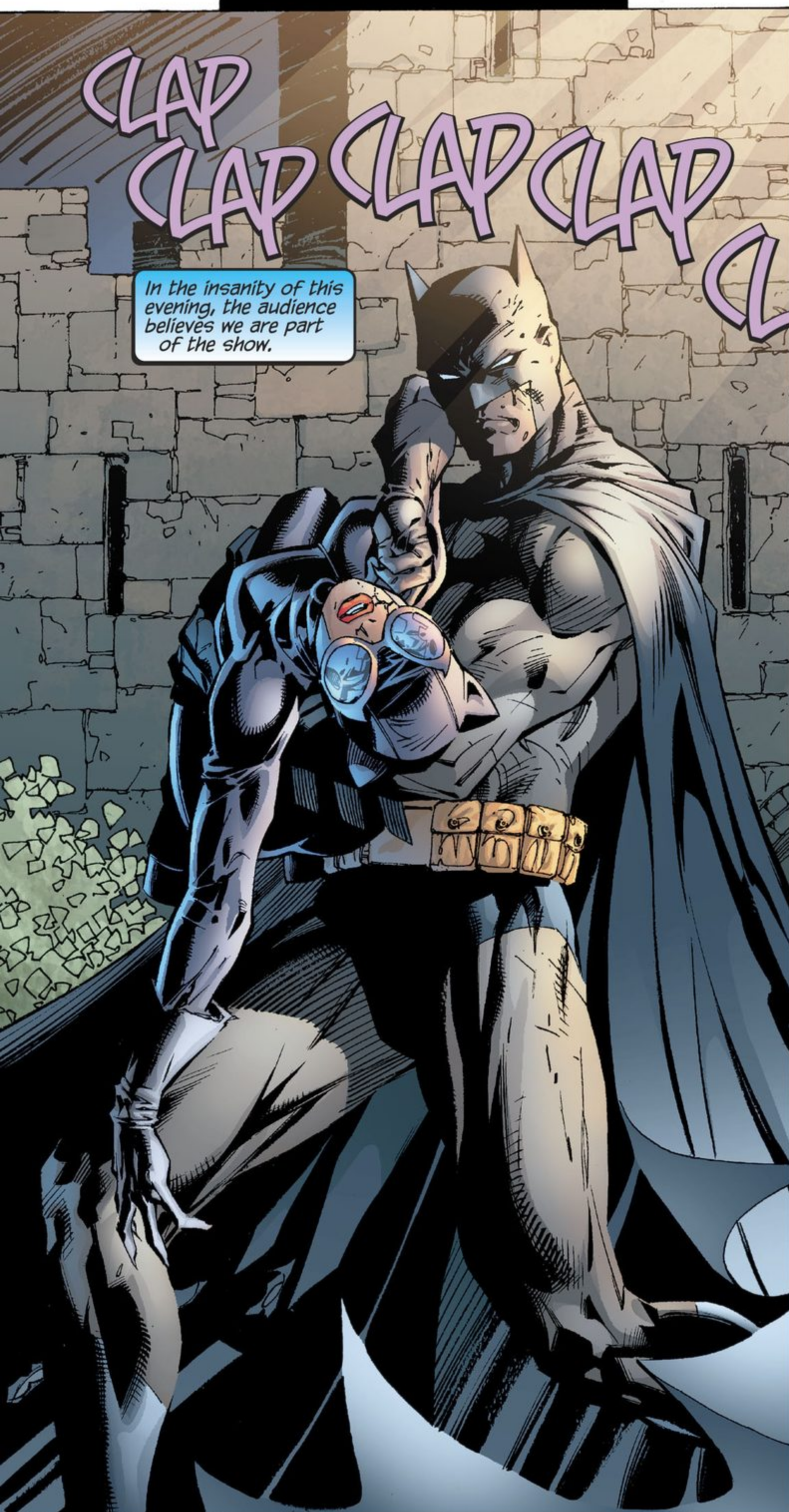
THE
AUDIENCE
ACTUALLY
WANTS THEIR
MONEY
BACK.

GNN--
EVERYBODY'S
A CRITIC!

WOK







CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP

In the insanity of this evening, the audience believes we are part of the show.



BRAVO! BRAVO!

The Opera.

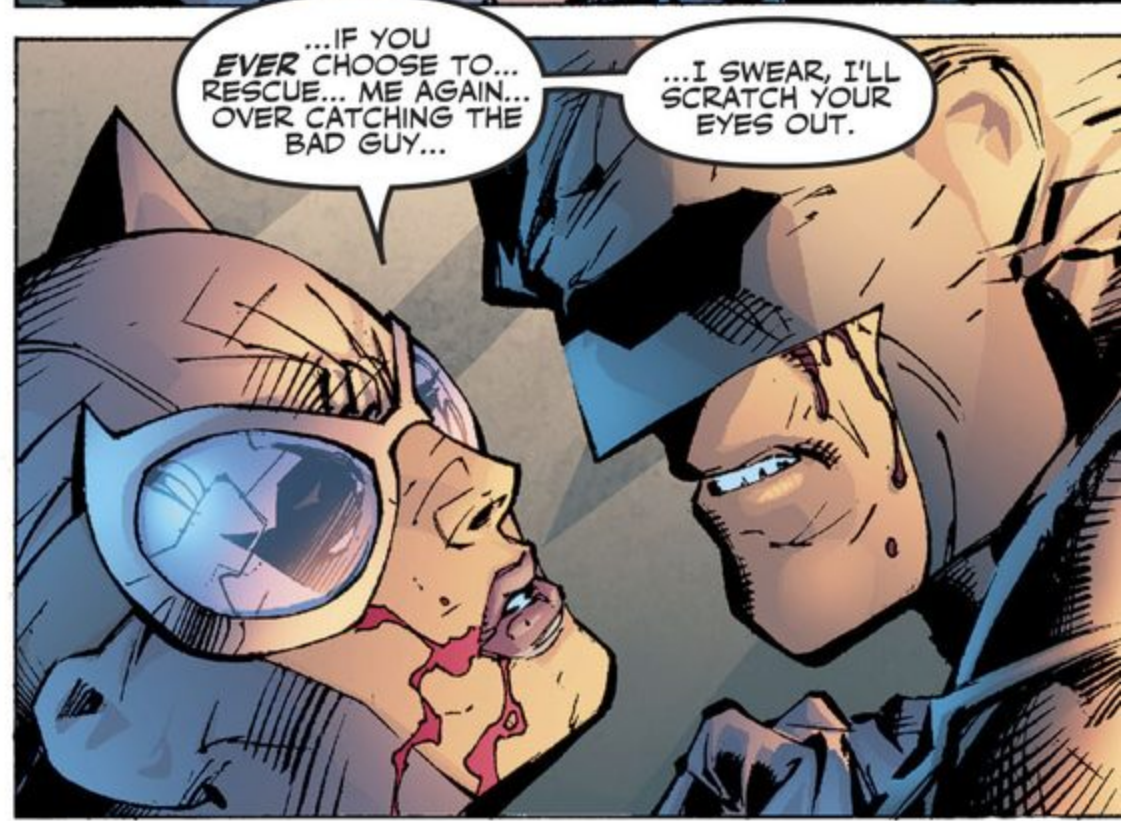


BATMAN...

LIE STILL. YOU NEED MEDICAL ATTENTION.

I KNOW THAT...

...COME CLOSER...



...IF YOU EVER CHOOSE TO... RESCUE... ME AGAIN... OVER CATCHING THE BAD GUY...

...I SWEAR, I'LL SCRATCH YOUR EYES OUT.



I'M NOT SOME KID YOU TOOK IN AND TRAI...N...E...D...

No. She is certainly not some kid.

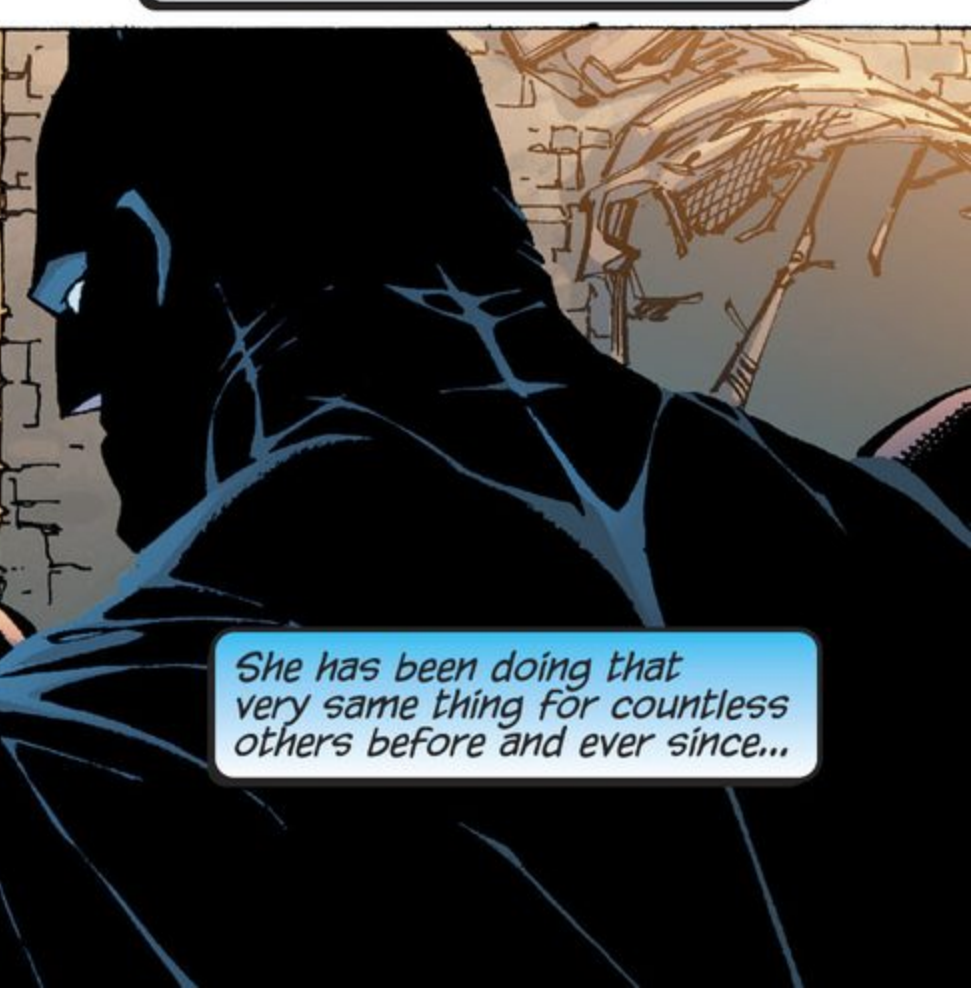


BATMAN...!

I'LL TAKE CARE OF HER.

YOU GO DO WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE.

Leslie Thompkins. On the night my parents were killed, she reached out to a small boy and gave him comfort in a world where he thought he had none.



She has been doing that very same thing for countless others before and ever since...



THAT
CONCLUDES
THIS EVENING'S
PERFORMANCE.

MS. QUINN CAN
BE NEXT SEEN IN
"A CLEAN GETAWAY,"
WRITTEN BY THE
STARLET
HERSELF.



I
WANT WHAT
YOU *STOLE*
FROM ME.

WHUMPH



AND PEOPLE
IN ICE WATER
WANT HELL--

-- BUT
THAT DOESN'T
MEAN THEY'RE
GONNA
GET IT.

CHUD



APPLAUSE.

APPLAUSE.

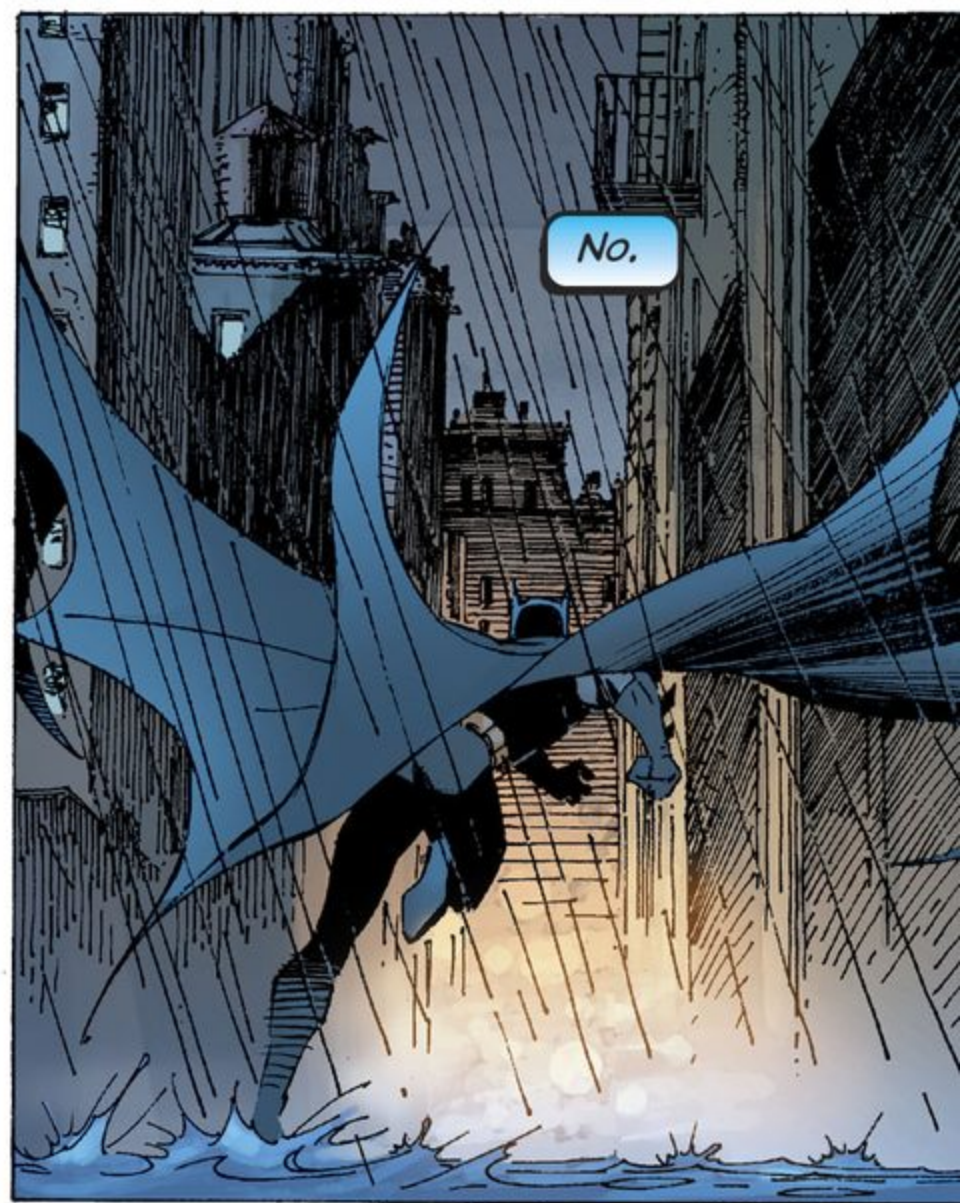
APPLAUSE.



GIVE
IT BACK!



Selina's earring.
Harley came this way...



NOW,
THAT'S HOW
YOU MAKE AN
ENTRANCE!

BANG

HA HA HA
HA HA HA
HA HA HA
HA HA HA
HA HA HA

There was something
about the Opera --
how they often ended
in tragedy -- that my
father found appealing...

NIVILLE
POCE

BOOM

NOW,
THAT'S HOW
YOU MAKE AN
ENTRANCE!

HA HA HA
HA HA HA
HA HA HA
HA HA HA
HA HA HA

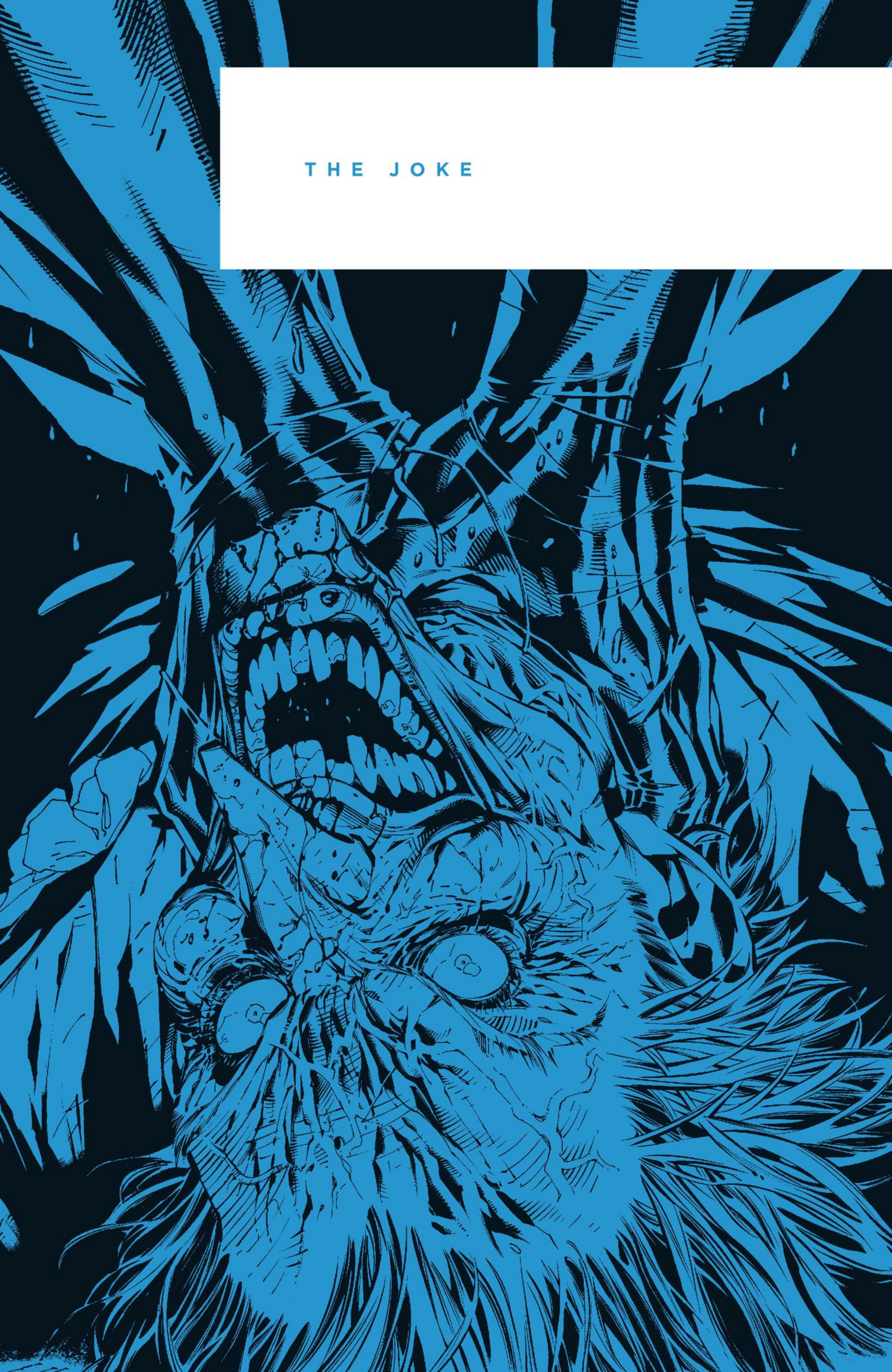
There was something
about the Opera --
how they often ended
in tragedy -- that my
father found appealing...

BIGS

UNVILLE
CE



THE JOKE





The Joker.

I have known him longer than any other criminal.

STOP...

He shot Barbara Gordon at point blank range and left her to die.



The fact that she is still alive does nothing to lessen the anguish he brought down on her.

Deemed "insane" by the courts, he never went to jail for the crime.



Despite all my efforts, I know very little about his origin...

STOP...

... Who he was before he became the monster he is today.



He shot Lieutenant Sarah Essen -- Former Police Commissioner Jim Gordon's wife -- and killed her.

The Joker's life should have ended then and there.

Dick, Dick Grayson, Nightwing. He explained to me once that The Joker and I are forever linked in constant battle.

STOP...

That in some sick way, The Joker exists because of me.

How I represent the order that is necessary to live in Gotham City and The Joker is the chaos that disrupts that order.



The Joker beat a child named Jason Todd to death for nothing more than wanting to be the young hero Robin, The Boy Wonder.

He walked away from any responsibility for that crime by using some bizarre "diplomatic immunity" he had obtained.



Only moments ago, The Joker took the life of a childhood friend.

Doctor Thomas Elliot -- Tommy -- returned to me as I lay dying. Without any hesitation, he used his skills as a surgeon.

I am alive today only because of him.



Now, Tommy is dead and The Joker killed him.

STOP...

I think about what Nightwing said. My being responsible for The Joker as years' worth of rage courses through my fist.



I cannot...

STOP...



STOP...

I will not...



...accept any
responsibility...

STOP...



...for The Joker.

BATMAN...

A dramatic comic book illustration of Batman holding the Joker by the collar in a rain-soaked city street. Batman, in his iconic suit, looks down with a grimace at the Joker. The Joker, with his signature green hair and wide, toothy grin, looks up at Batman. Rain is falling heavily around them, and a bright lightning bolt strikes in the background between tall city buildings.

Chapter Seven THE JOKE

Except that I
should have killed
him long ago.

STOP...ME...
IF YOU'VE
HEARD THIS ONE
BEFORE...



...BATMAN...
I... I...

I'M
INNOCENT.



SSH!

YA SEE...
I DIDN'T KILL
THIS GUY.



HEH.

I can hear his
confession,
but it means
nothing.



Harley Quinn.

OOPSIE!

YARRGH!

HEH-HEH.
SORRY, MR. J!
HE...UH...
DUCKED!

WHAM



GET AWAY
FROM 'IM, YA BIG
GALOOT!

IF MY
GUY SAYS
HE'S INNOCENT,
THEN HE'S
INNOCENT!

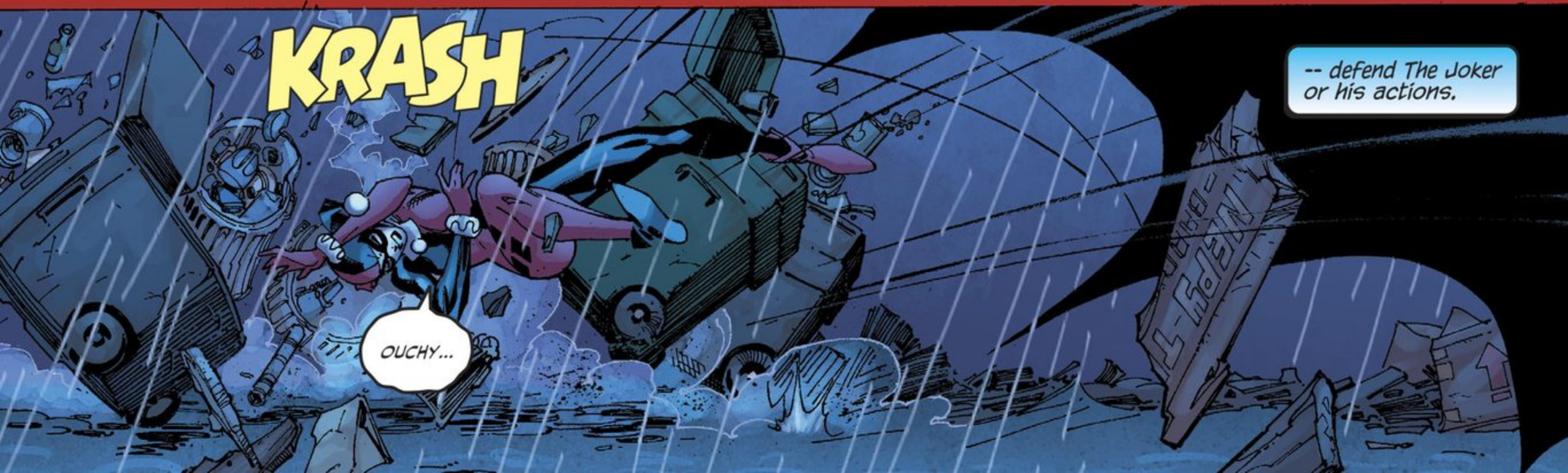
RIGHT,
PUDDIN'?

*In some perverse
way she loves him.*



ERGL.

*I will let
no one --
nothing --*



KRASH

OUCHY...

*-- defend The Joker
or his actions.*

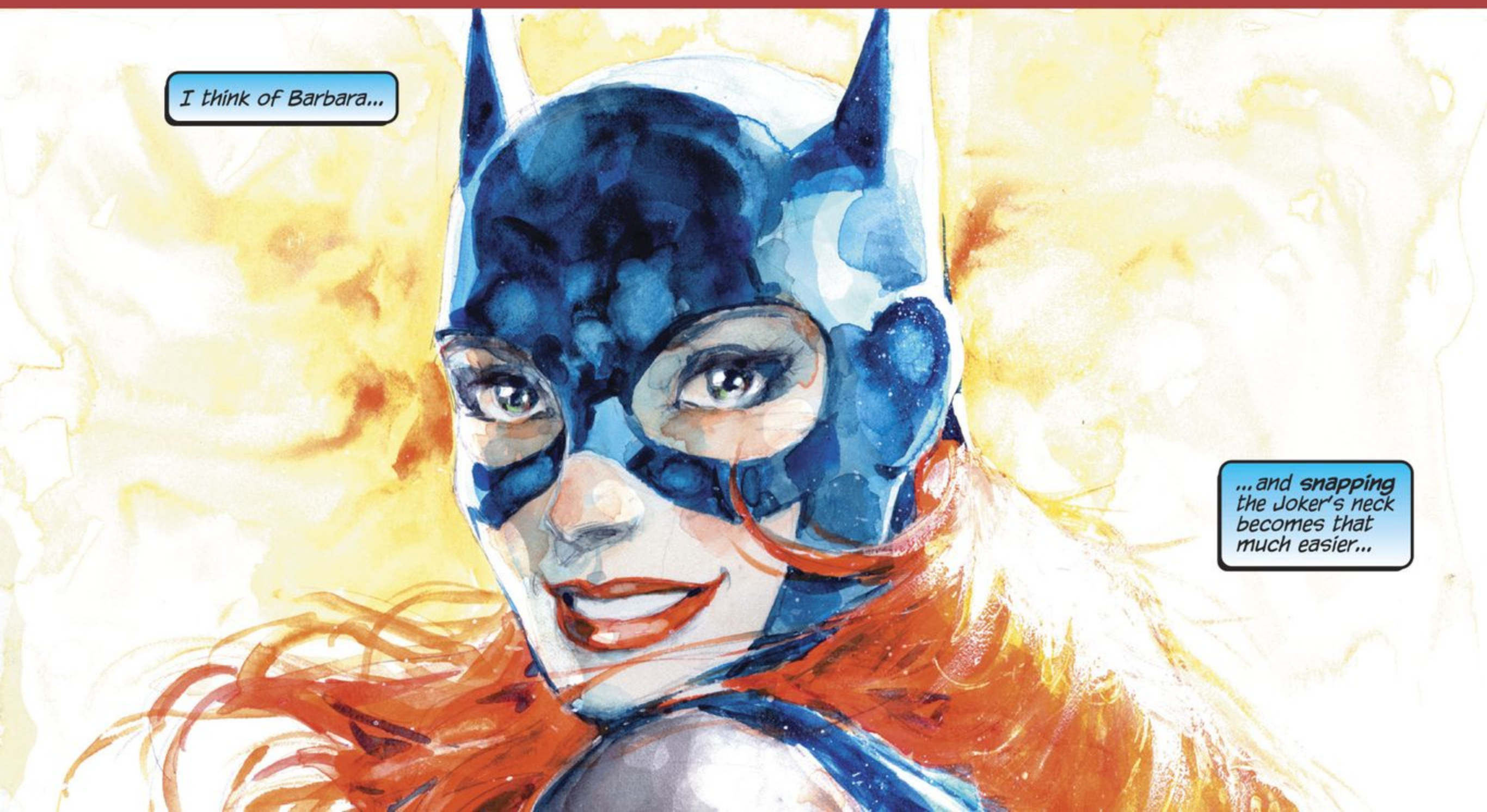


I'M...(ACK)
I'M NOT JOKING,
BATBOOB.



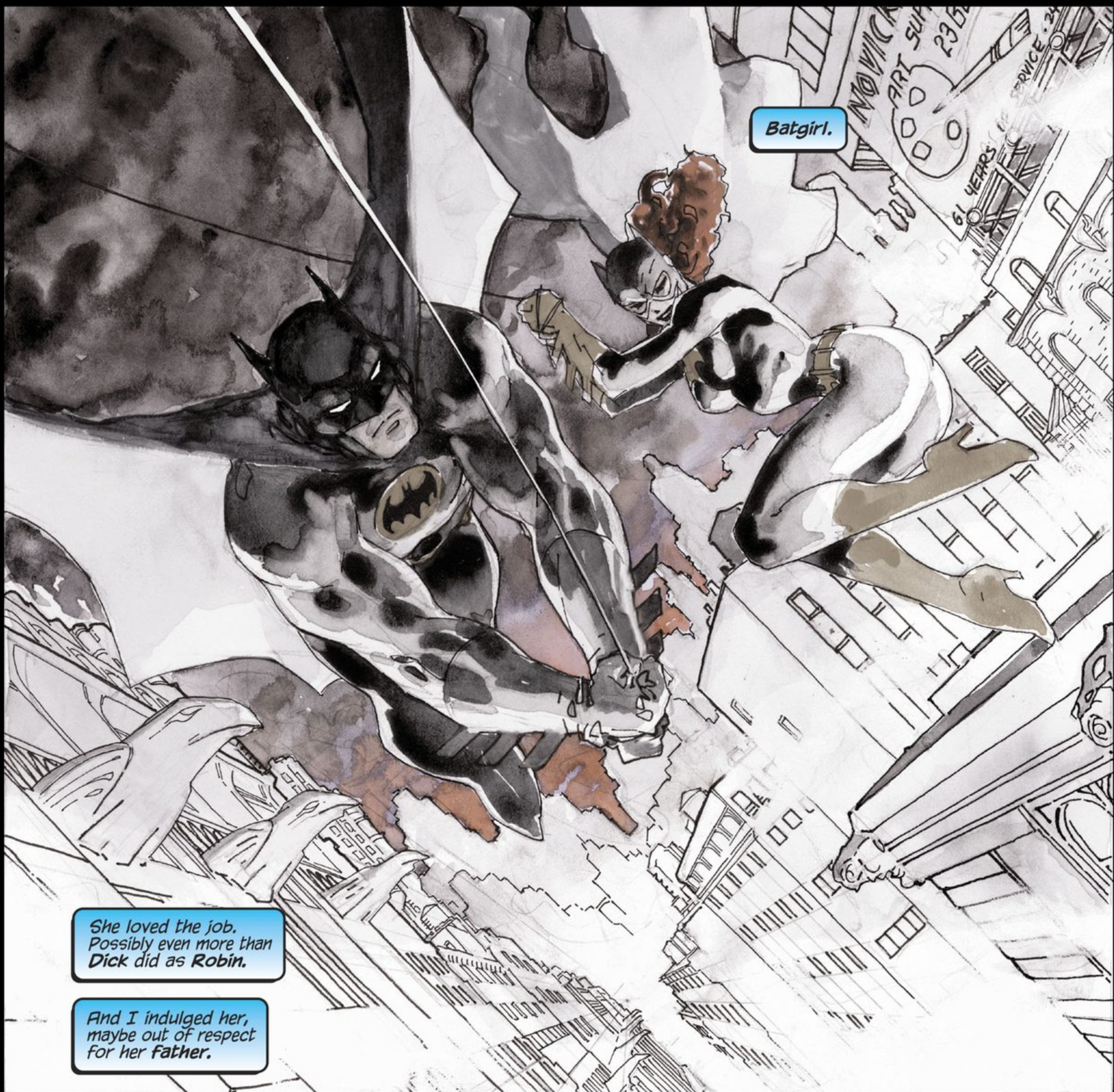
CHECK...
CHECK MY GUN...
NOTHING (GAH)
BUT BLANKS...!

*It's just another lie.
Another lie to keep
himself alive.*



I think of Barbara...

*...and snapping
the Joker's neck
becomes that
much easier...*



Batgirl.

She loved the job.
Possibly even more than
Dick did as Robin.

And I indulged her,
maybe out of respect
for her father.

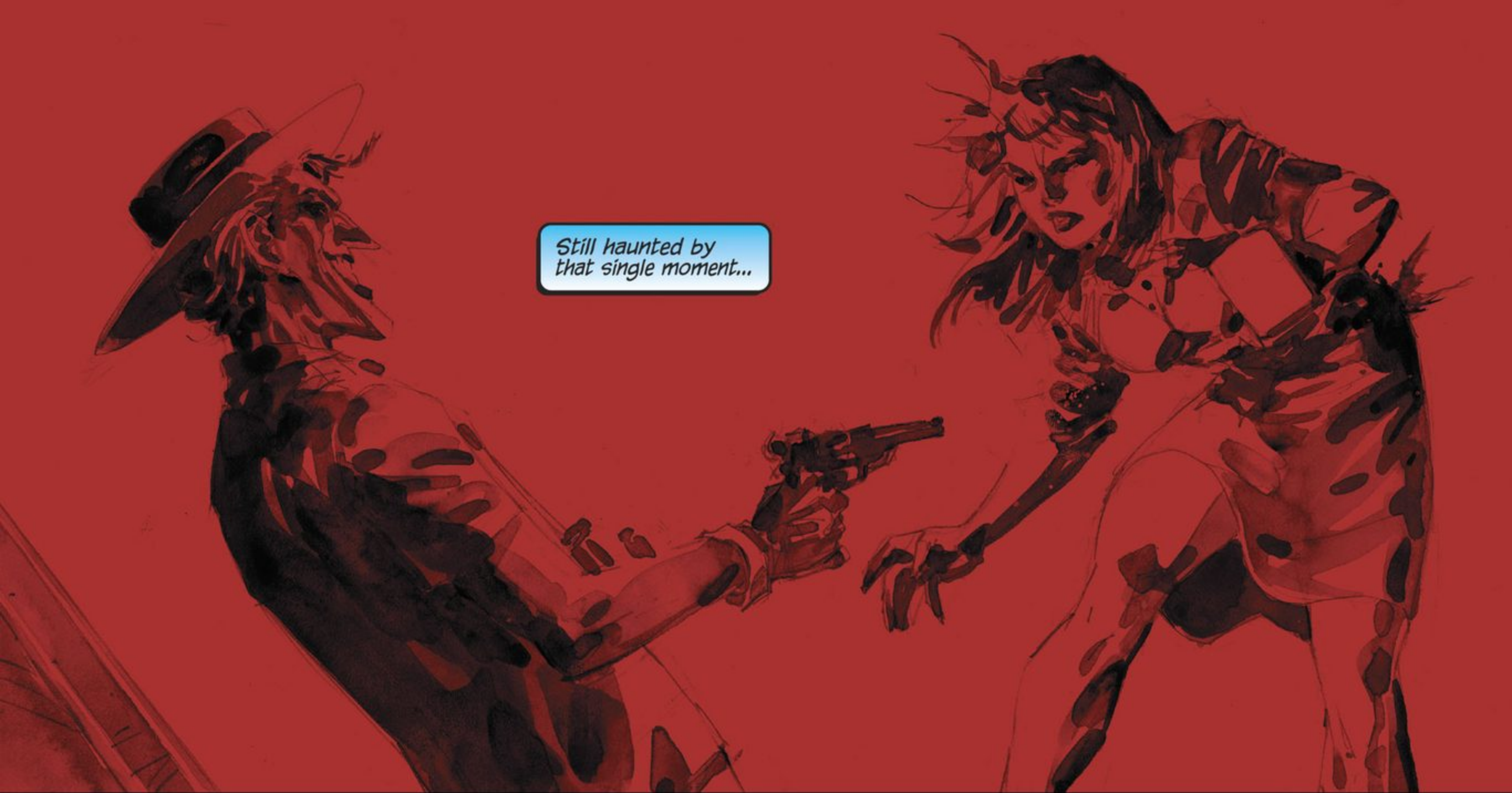


I understood her...
addiction to seeking
out justice.

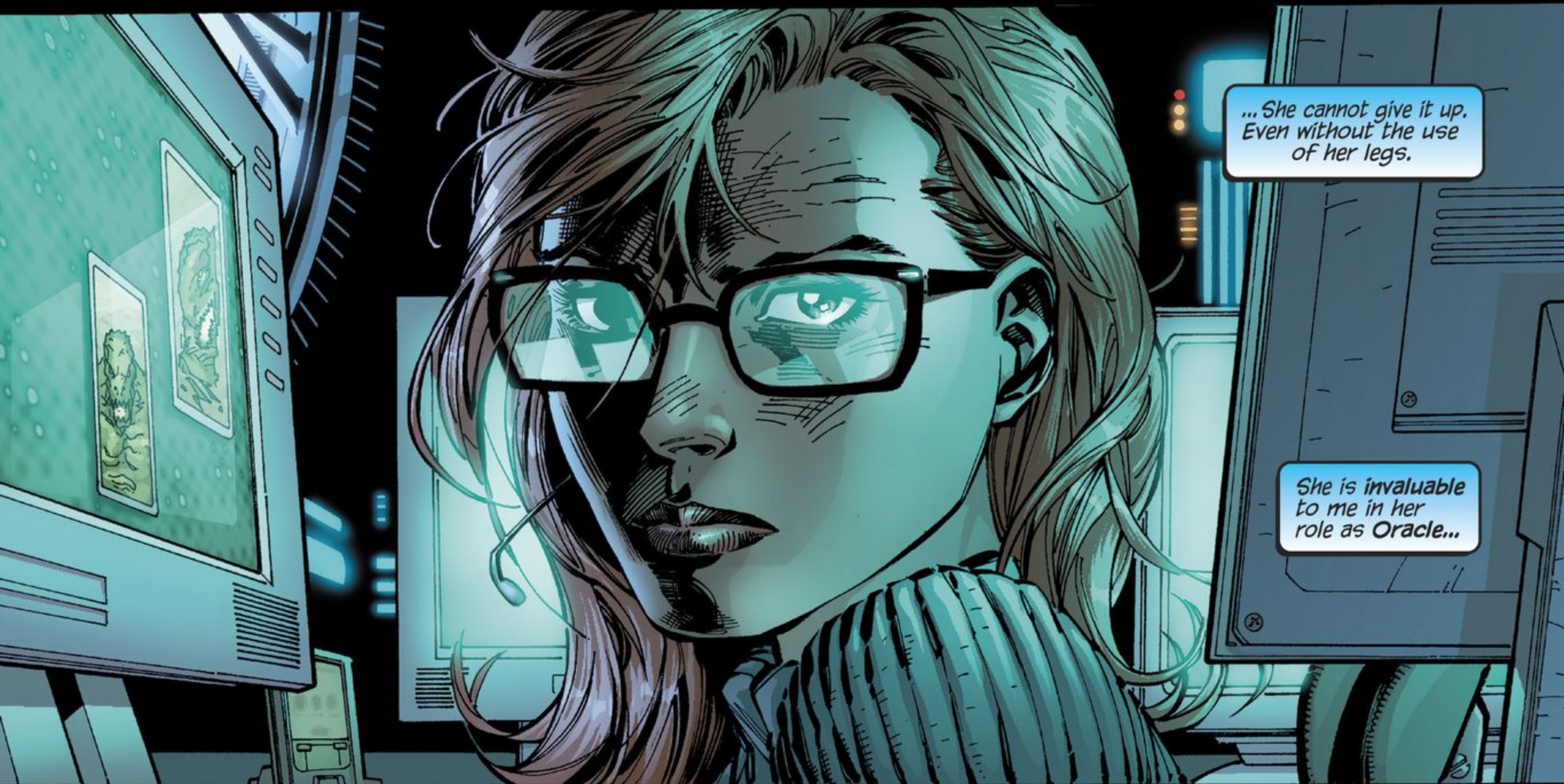
To rid this city of the evil
that manifests itself here.



Even though she
knew the risks...

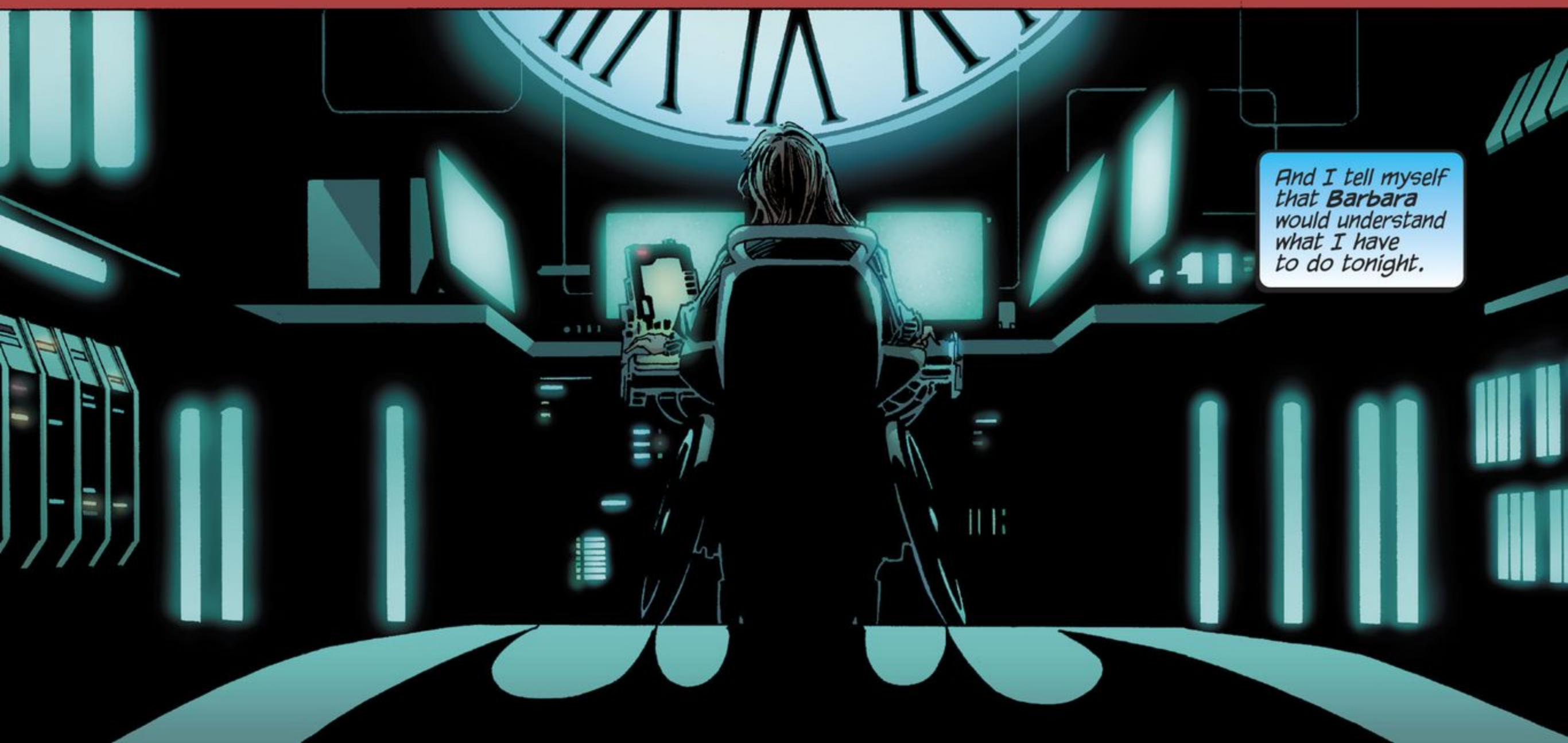


*Still haunted by
that single moment...*



*... She cannot give it up.
Even without the use
of her legs.*

*She is invaluable
to me in her
role as Oracle...*



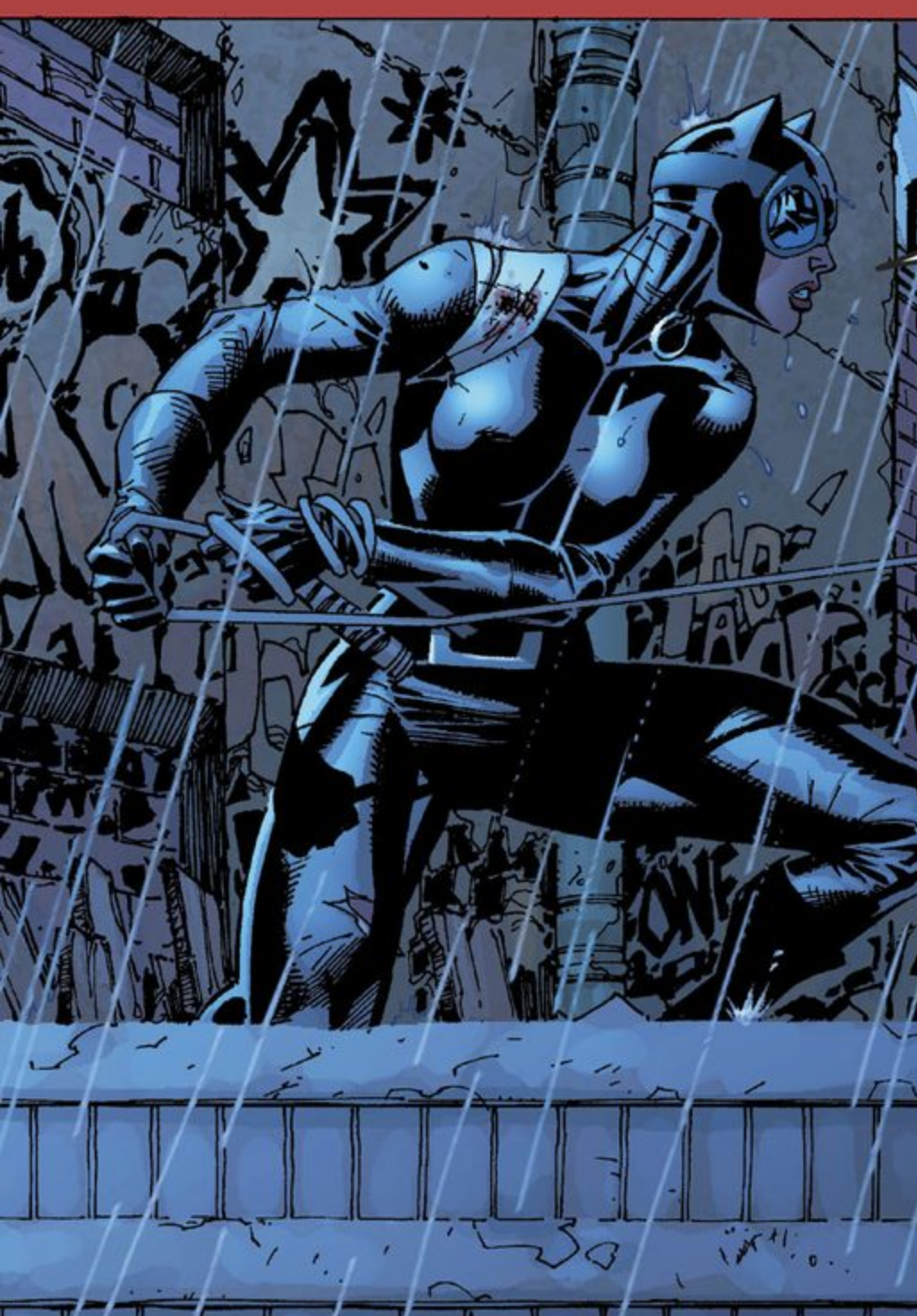
*And I tell myself
that **Barbara**
would understand
what I have
to do tonight.*



I DON'T WANT TO FIGHT YOU.

Catwoman.
Selina.

Earlier tonight, Harley Quinn shot her. Her shoulder is still damp with blood.



I'LL DO WHAT I HAVE TO TO KEEP YOU FROM DOING SOMETHING YOU'LL ONLY REGRET.

How could I regret what should have been done a long time ago?



How could she understand?



DON'T --!

GAH --
DAMMIT!



I *KNOW*
WHAT YOU'RE
FEELING.

BUT, IF OUR ROLES WERE
REVERSED, YOU WOULD DO
EVERYTHING IN YOUR POWER
TO STOP ME.

She wasn't there
when I found...

SKRCH

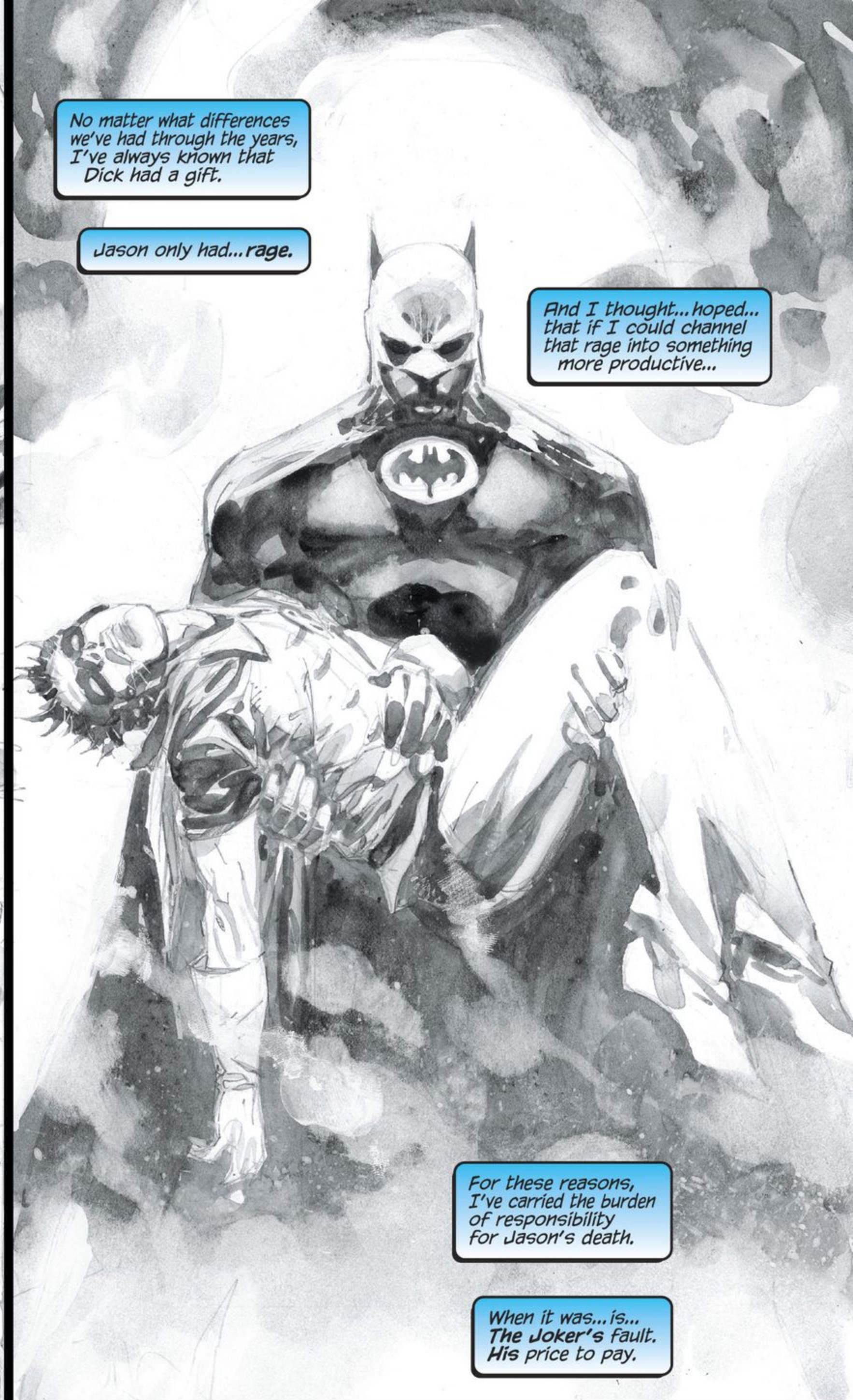


Jason.



*Jason never
had the
skills that
Dick had.*

*I should never
have let him put
on the costume.*



*No matter what differences
we've had through the years,
I've always known that
Dick had a gift.*

Jason only had...rage.

*And I thought...hoped...
that if I could channel
that rage into something
more productive...*

*For these reasons,
I've carried the burden
of responsibility
for Jason's death.*

*When it was...is...
The Joker's fault.
His price to pay.*





GAHHHH!

A large comic book panel showing Batman and Catwoman in a physical struggle in the rain. Batman is on the right, wearing his cowl and cape, with a determined expression. Catwoman is on the left, wearing her mask and goggles, with a pained or shouting expression. They are surrounded by rain and debris.

Whatever feelings I may have for you, Selina -- and **that** is very complicated right now --

-- I cannot let you stop me.



Her bullet wound makes her vulnerable and I exploit it.

A large comic book panel showing Batman holding Catwoman in the rain. Batman is on the right, holding Catwoman by the waist. Catwoman is on the left, looking up at him with a pained expression. The rain is heavy, and the background is dark and rainy.



And I tell myself she will understand someday...

A smaller comic book panel showing Batman and Catwoman in a close embrace in the rain. Batman is on the right, holding Catwoman. Catwoman is on the left, looking up at him. The rain is still falling.



Selina...

A close-up comic book panel of Catwoman's face in the rain. She is wearing her goggles and has a pained expression. Rain is falling all around her.



...Don't you see
that our relationship
only allows for the
possibility that
one night...

...it will be *you*
that I find killed
by The Joker?

I cannot...
will not ...
allow *that*
nightmare
to become
a reality.



He dies tonight
by my hand.



HELLLLLP!

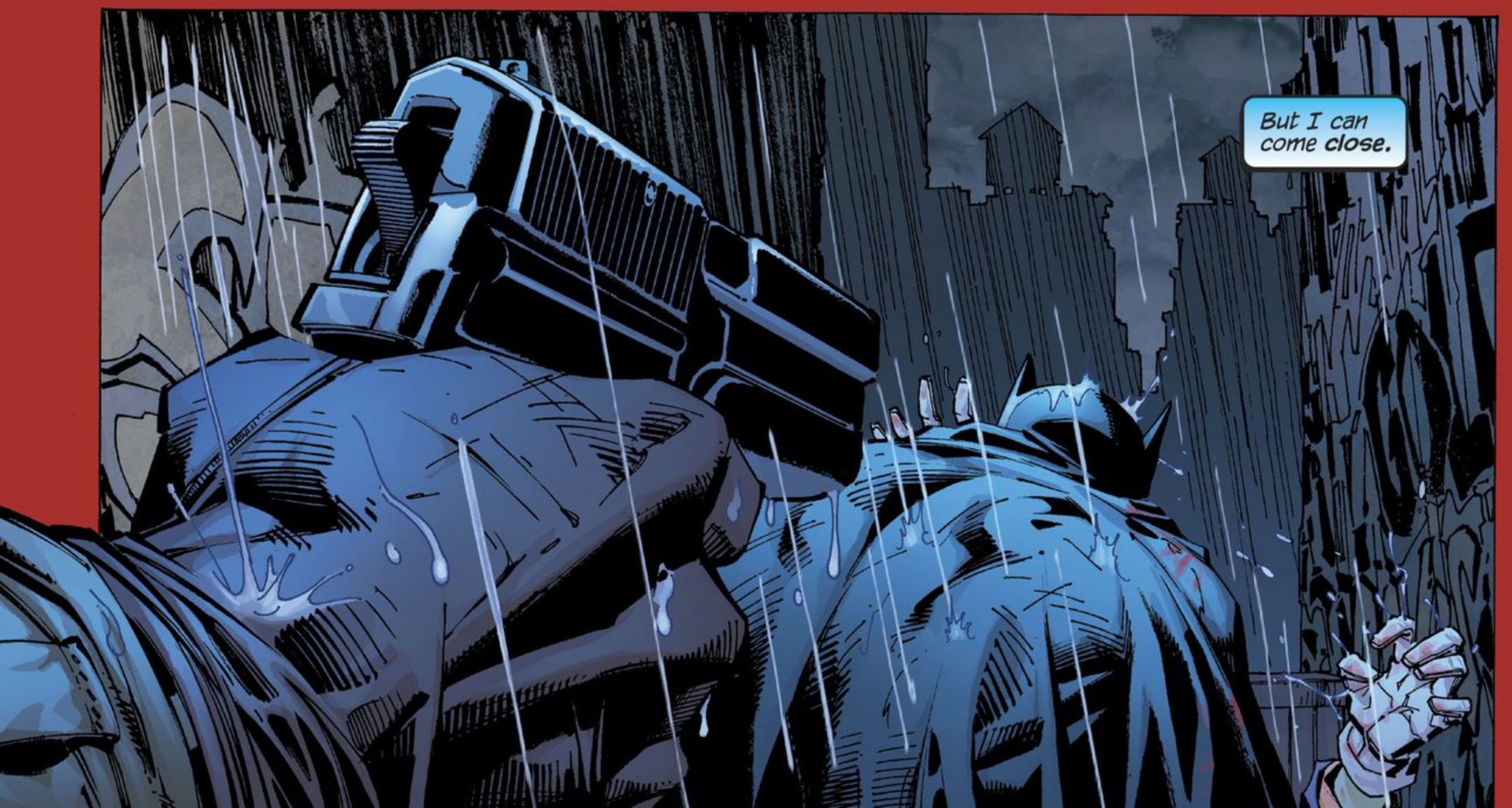
WILDMAN!

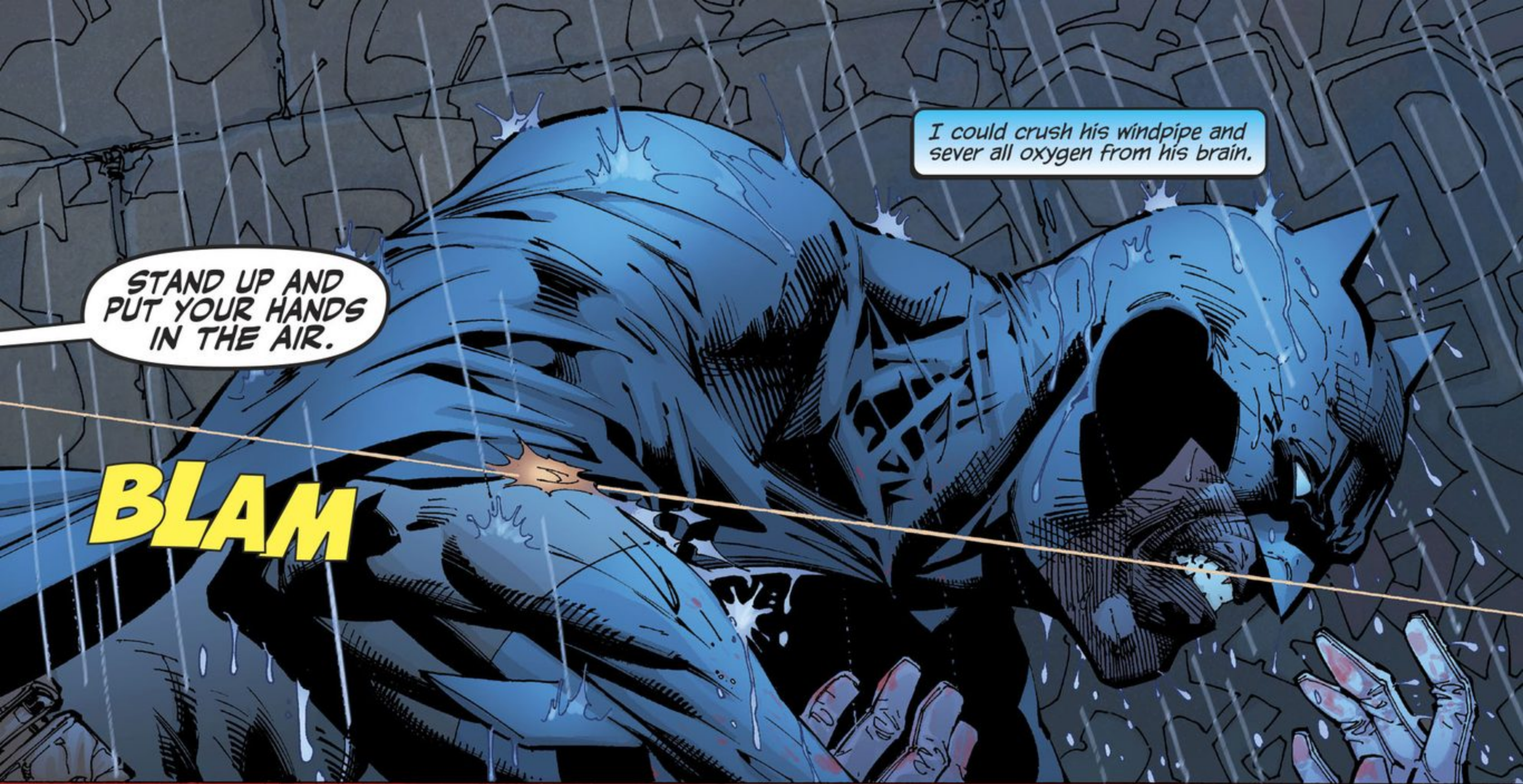
MADMAN!



BATTYMAN!

There will be
no escape.

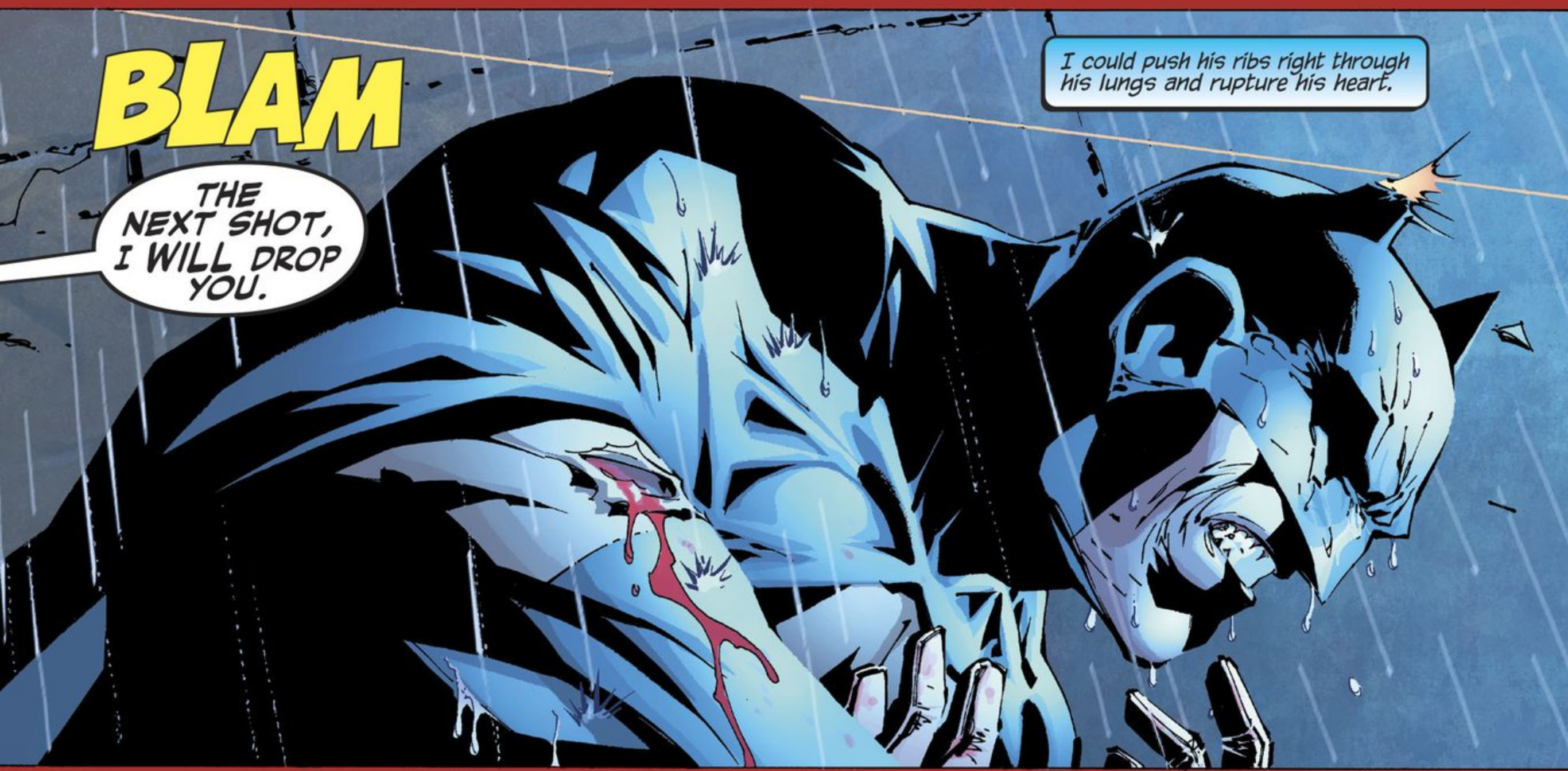




STAND UP AND
PUT YOUR HANDS
IN THE AIR.

BLAM

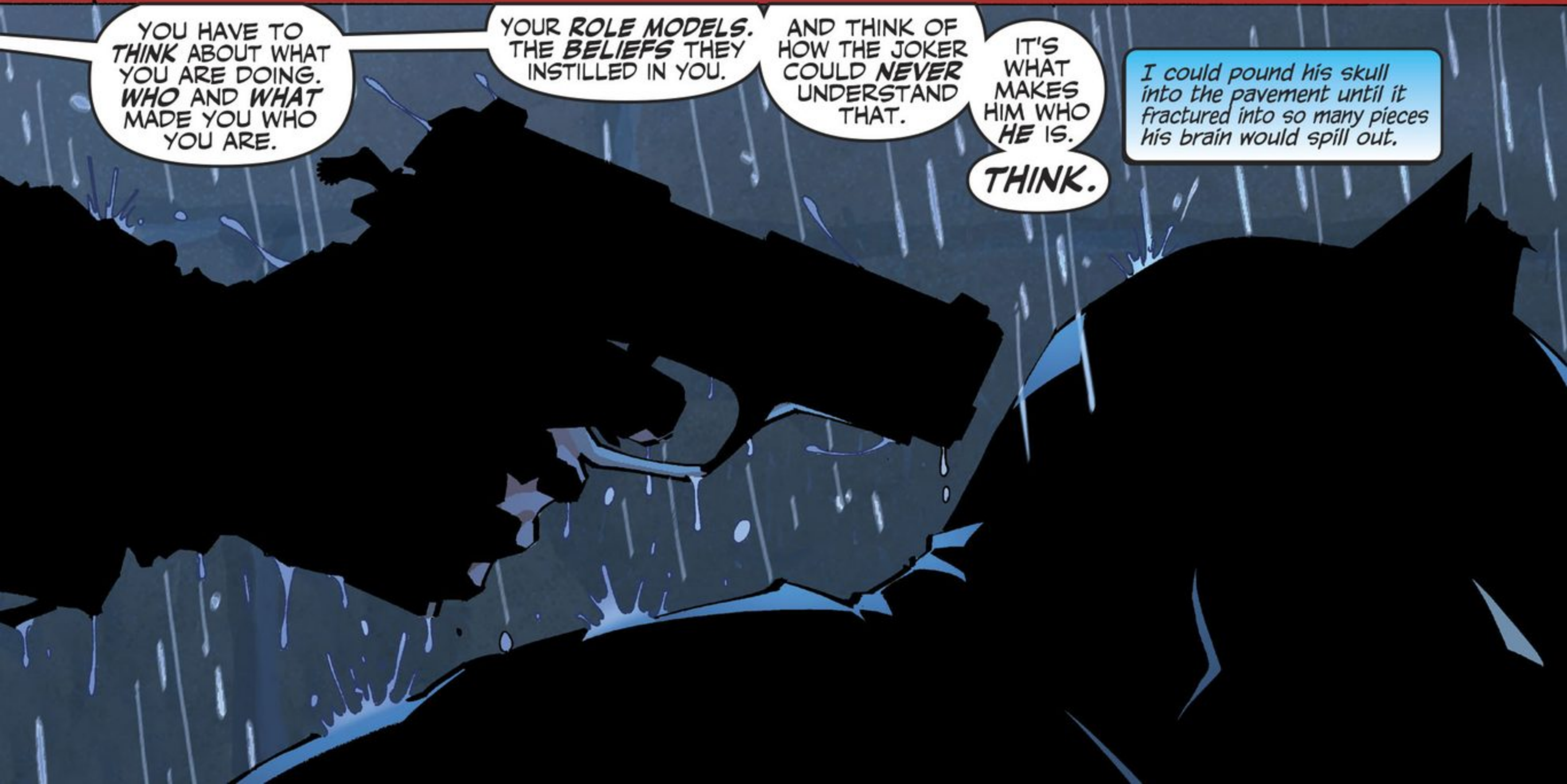
I could crush his windpipe and
sever all oxygen from his brain.



BLAM

THE
NEXT SHOT,
I WILL DROP
YOU.

I could push his ribs right through
his lungs and rupture his heart.



YOU HAVE TO
THINK ABOUT WHAT
YOU ARE DOING.
WHO AND WHAT
MADE YOU WHO
YOU ARE.

YOUR **ROLE MODELS**.
THE **BELIEFS** THEY
INSTILLED IN YOU.

AND THINK OF
HOW THE JOKER
COULD **NEVER**
UNDERSTAND
THAT.

IT'S
WHAT
MAKES
HIM WHO
HE IS.

THINK.

I could pound his skull
into the pavement until it
fractured into so many pieces
his brain would spill out.

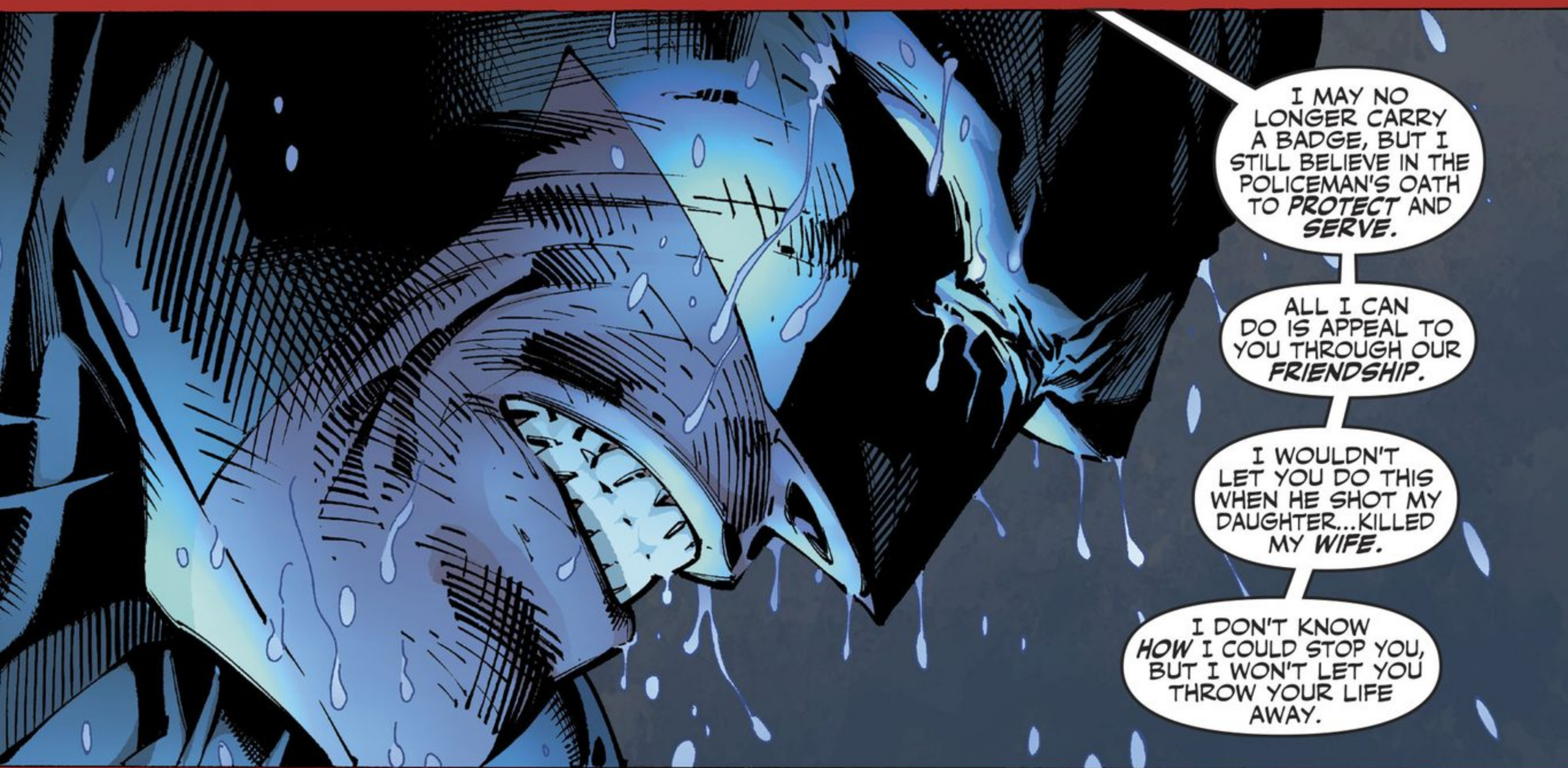


...

GOD
HELP
ME...

...YOU *HAVE*
THOUGHT THIS
THROUGH.

*It is what should
have been done
a long time ago.*



I MAY NO
LONGER CARRY
A BADGE, BUT I
STILL BELIEVE IN THE
POLICEMAN'S OATH
TO *PROTECT* AND
SERVE.

ALL I CAN
DO IS APPEAL TO
YOU THROUGH OUR
FRIENDSHIP.

I WOULDN'T
LET YOU DO THIS
WHEN HE SHOT MY
DAUGHTER...KILLED
MY *WIFE*.

I DON'T KNOW
HOW I COULD STOP YOU,
BUT I WON'T LET YOU
THROW YOUR LIFE
AWAY.



*Jim Gordon. With all he's lost...
I thought... he'd understand.*

JIM...

YOU AND I HAVE
SEEN MORE THAN OUR
FAIR SHARE OF *TRAGEDIES*
AND THIRSTED FOR
REVENGE.

IF BATMAN
WANTED TO BE A
KILLER, HE COULD
HAVE STARTED LONG
AGO.

BUT, IT'S A *LINE*.
ON ONE SIDE WE
BELIEVE IN THE *LAW*.
ON THE OTHER...

SOMETIMES,
THE *LAW* FAILS US.
MAYBE THAT'S WHY I'VE
UNDERSTOOD YOU...
ALLOWED YOU
TO HELP PROTECT
THIS CITY.

BATMAN, IF YOU
CROSS THAT LINE --
IF YOU KILL THE JOKER
TONIGHT --

-- I WILL *LEAD*
THE HUNT TO BRING
YOU TO JUSTICE.

IN THE EYES
OF THE LAW...
IN *MY* EYES
YOU'LL BE NO
DIFFERENT
FROM *HIM*.

HOW
MANY MORE
LIVES ARE
WE GOING
TO LET HIM
RUIN?

I DON'T
CARE.

I WON'T
LET HIM RUIN
YOURS.



I'M
INNOCENT.





It was from an alley like this one that a man with a gun emerged from the darkness and murdered my mother and father.



In that single moment, my childhood ended.



I made a promise on the grave of my parents that I would rid this city of the evil that took their lives.

Tonight...I nearly became a part of that evil...



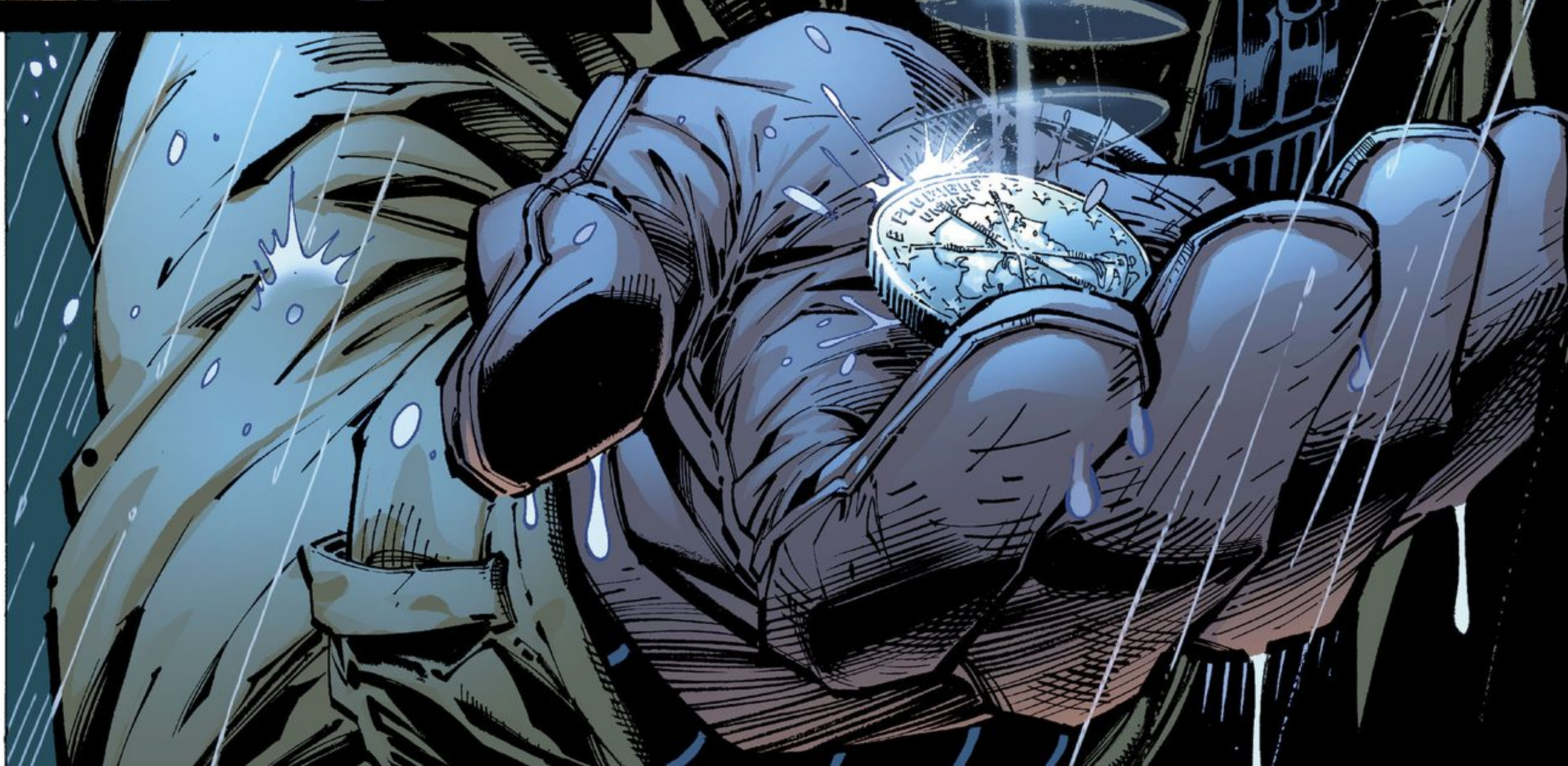
HE IS
INNOCENT.



FWAP



GET THE
JOKE?





THE DEAD





Tommy Elliot
is dead.

WE LIVE
IN A VIOLENT
WORLD.



I went to my first
funeral at the age of ten.



As kids, to our parents' horror,
Tommy and I would play hide
and seek among the gravestones.

His father... and later,
his mother are both
buried here as well.



DOCTOR
THOMAS ELLIOT
USED HIS SKILLS
AS A SURGEON TO
SAVE THE LIVES
THAT OTHERS WOULD
HAVE TAKEN
AWAY.

UNFORTUNATELY,
THERE WAS NO ONE
SKILLED ENOUGH
TO SAVE HIM.

Despite spending most of
his adulthood in Philadelphia,
he left instructions that
he be laid to rest here,
next to his parents.

In The Gotham City
Cemetery.



I... I WISH I KNEW HOW TO SUM UP A MAN'S ENTIRE LIFE IN A FEW SENTENCES.

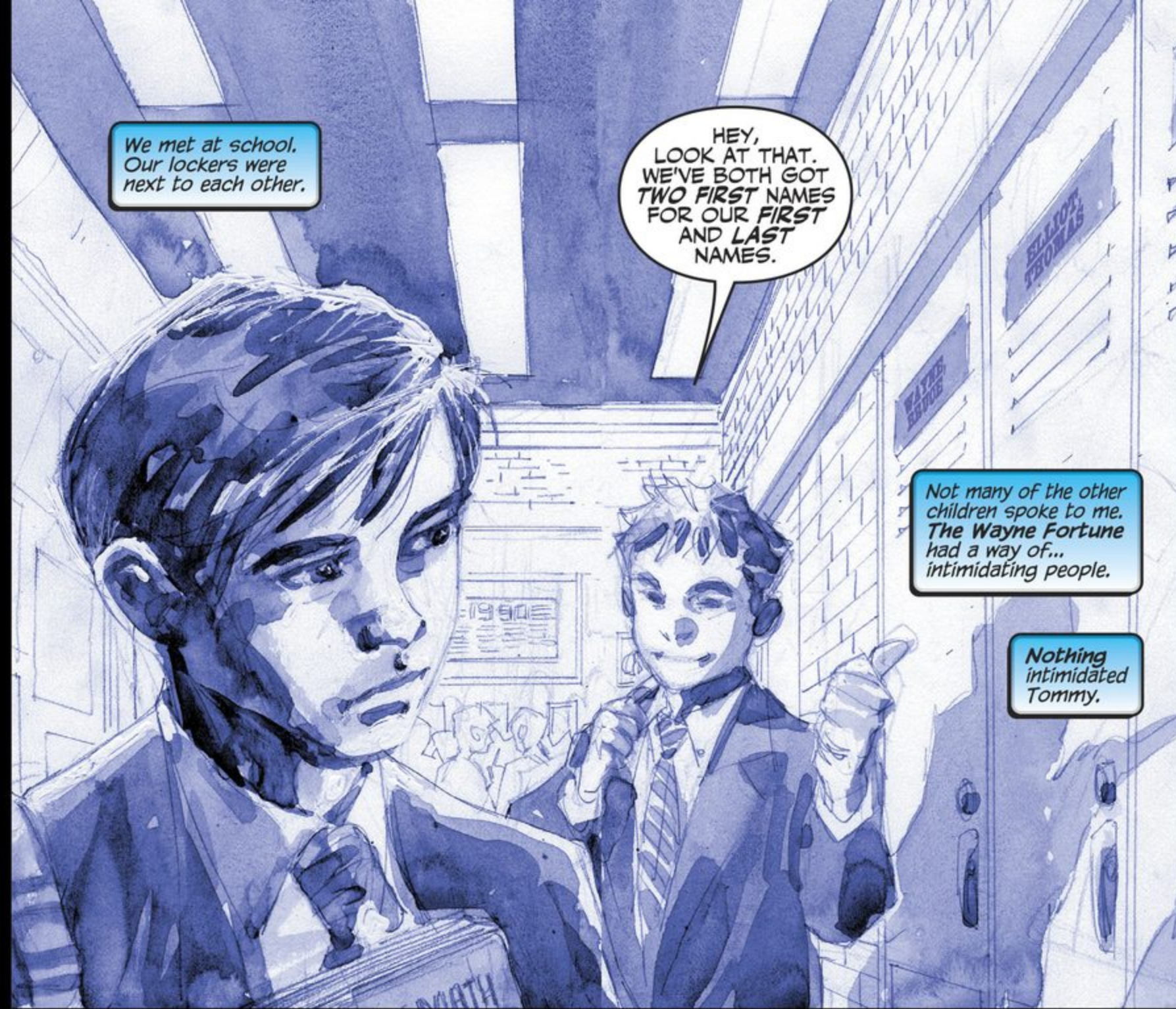
BUT, AS THOSE OF YOU WHO KNOW ME CAN ATTEST, WHEN IT COMES TO THE CRAFT OF THE WORDSMITH, I'M SOMETHING OF A FAILURE.

DICK... YOU EVER HEAR BRUCE TALK ABOUT THIS GUY BEFORE?

NOT MUCH. BUT, HE DOESN'T REALLY TALK ABOUT HIS CHILDHOOD EITHER, TIM.

Tommy left no family. No heirs. Only the family chauffeur, Clarence, who had been retired for years knew where to find his personal effects.

I see Dick and Tim and suddenly, my life seems that much richer.



We met at school. Our lockers were next to each other.

HEY, LOOK AT THAT. WE'VE BOTH GOT TWO FIRST NAMES FOR OUR FIRST AND LAST NAMES.

Not many of the other children spoke to me. The Wayne Fortune had a way of... intimidating people.

Nothing intimidated Tommy.



YOU PLAY?

I DO.

ANY GOOD?

BETTER THAN YOU.

HA!

Tommy loved a good challenge more than anything.



Alfred, Leslie Thompkins, Lucius Fox.

SO, I THOUGHT IT BEST I READ SOMETHING THAT TOMMY WOULD'VE ENJOYED.

OH, PLEASE, NOT "O' CAPTAIN, MY CAPTAIN"...

DON'T YOU KNOW, SELINA? IT'S ONE OF BRUCE'S FAVORITE PIECES.

REMEMB ME TO NOT HAVE HIM SPEAK AT MY FUNERAL...

... Selina...

I seem to have more family than I seem to have...



"O CAPTAIN!
MY CAPTAIN!
OUR FEARFUL TRIP
IS DONE. THE SHIP
HAS WEATHER'D
EVERY RACK,
THE PRIZE WE
SOUGHT IS
WON."



I was living in Paris
when Tommy graduated
from medical school.

Alfred got word to me
that he had wanted to
follow in **my** father's
footsteps and become the
world's greatest surgeon...



...and I was in Japan
when Alfred sent me
a telegram telling me
Tommy's mother had
died of cancer.

I meant -- I always
meant to get back to
see him. But... my life
had changed by then.



"EXULT O SHORES,
AND RING O BELLS!
BUT I WITH MOURNFUL TREAD,
WALK THE DECK MY CAPTAIN LIES,
FALLEN COLD AND DEAD."

Chapter Eight
THE DEAD

I have been to
too many funerals.

SLEEP WELL,
TOMMY...



The cave.

I have been awake
for fifty-six hours.

Subject analysis,
Elliot, Thomas.
Cause of death,
heart failure due
to rupture of the
aortic valve and
left ventricle.

Ballistic report indicates
the bullet was fired from
a 9mm Glock, standard
issue Gotham City
Police Department firearm.

Subject's blood
flooded into
the lungs --

-- Joker, identity unknown --
charged with the murder,
being held at Arkham Asylum
for observation.

-- Cause of death,
heart failure due
to rupture of the
aortic valve --

-- Joker,
identity
unknown --

As with everything,
the answer lies
somewhere in
the details...

-- analysis,
Elliot, Thomas.
Cause of death,
heart failure due
to rupture --

BRUCE...?

HELLO?
I'VE BEEN
TALKING TO
YOU FOR
ABOUT TEN
MINUTES.

I HAVE BEEN
LISTENING.

-- Joker,
identity
unknown --

DO YOU THINK
YOU COULD TURN
THAT THING OFF
FOR A COUPLE OF
MINUTES SO WE
CAN TALK --

-- WHICH
REQUIRES YOU
DOING *MORE* THAN
LISTENING?

COMPUTER,
"AUDIO AND
VISUAL OFF."

-- Gotham City
Police Dept--
Audio and visual
OFF.

YOU'VE GOT
TWO MINUTES,
DICK.

AND WHILE
I APPRECIATE
YOUR CONCERN
FOR MY WELL-
BEING --

IT'S NOT
JUST ME. ALFRED.
BARBARA. TIM --

GIVEN THAT
I'VE LOST A FRIEND --
A GOOD FRIEND --
EVEN THOUGH WE
HADN'T SEEN EACH
OTHER FOR A LONG
TIME --

-- HEY, GIVEN
YOUR USUAL GRIM
AND MOODY SELF,
YOU'RE BEING A *BOX*
OF CHOCOLATES.

BUT, YOU
CAUGHT THE
BAD GUY.

THE *JOKER'S*
BACK IN *ARKHAM*
FOR LIKE THE
SEVENTY-NINTH
TIME --

-- WHERE MAYBE
WE CAN HOLD ONTO
HIM FOR MORE THAN
AN HOUR AND A HALF
THIS TIME...

THE *JOKER*
DIDN'T KILL
TOMMY.



WHOA.

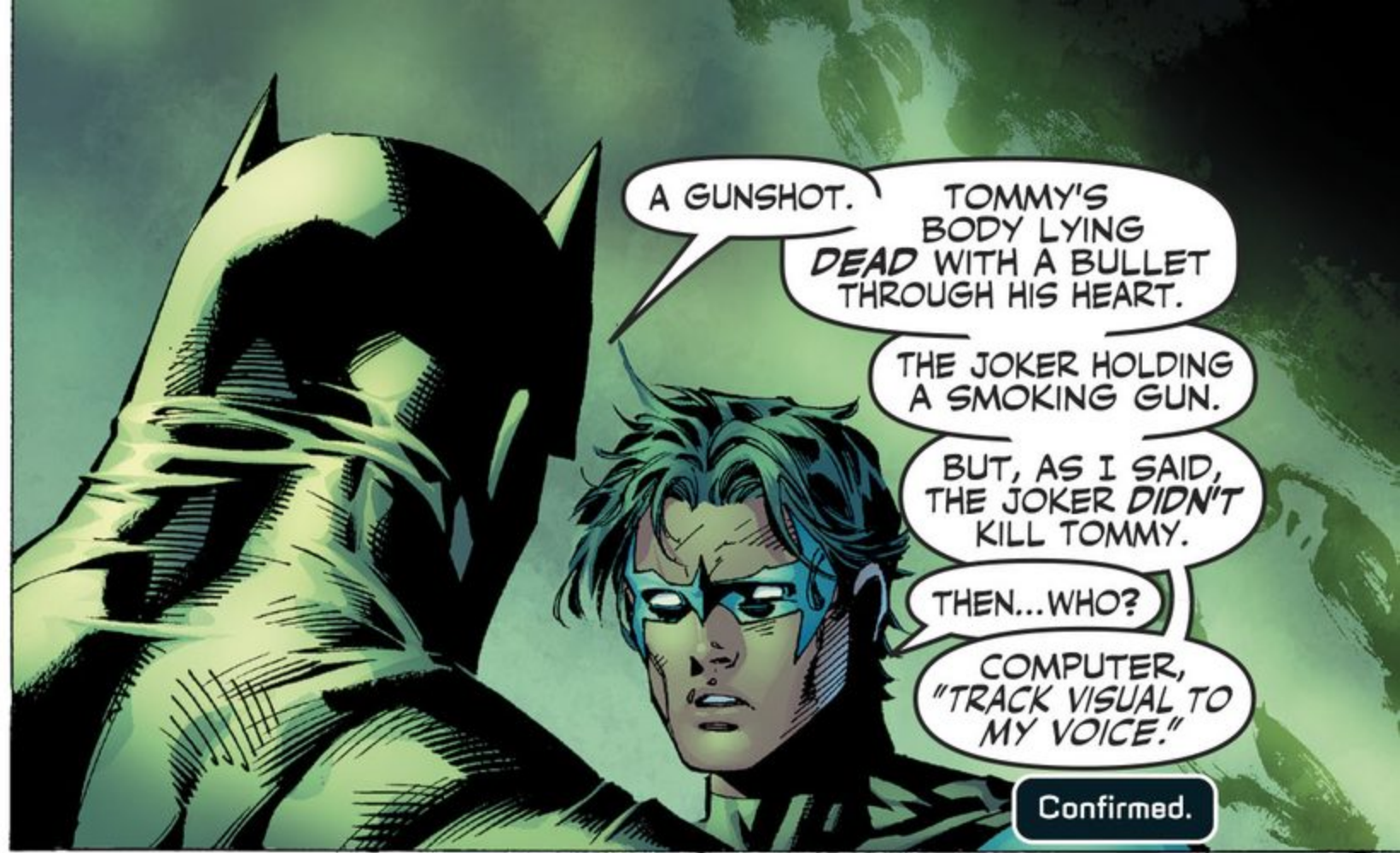
WAIT.

BACK UP.

YOU WERE THERE.

I SAW WHAT I WAS MEANT TO SEE.

HEARD WHAT I WAS MEANT TO HEAR.



A GUNSHOT. TOMMY'S BODY LYING DEAD WITH A BULLET THROUGH HIS HEART.

THE JOKER HOLDING A SMOKING GUN.

BUT, AS I SAID, THE JOKER DIDN'T KILL TOMMY.

THEN...WHO?

COMPUTER, "TRACK VISUAL TO MY VOICE."

Confirmed.



IT INVOLVES THE MANIPULATION OF KILLER CROC, CATWOMAN, POISON IVY AND HARLEY QUINN.

IT REACHES AS HIGH AS SUPERMAN.

AND AS LOW AS THE JOKER.

IT'S SOMEONE NEW.

OR SOMEONE OLD TRYING SOMETHING NEW.

THAT NARROWS IT DOWN TO, SAY, HALF THE CRIMINAL POPULATION OF GOTHAM CITY.



IF DETECTIVE WORK WERE EASY --

-- EVERYONE WOULD BE DOING IT.



WAS THAT... HUMOR?

NOW, I AM WORRIED ABOUT YOU.



IT EVEN GOT TO ME.

I ALMOST KILLED THE JOKER.

...I HONESTLY WANTED TO...



BRUCE...

WITHOUT SOUNDING TRITE --

-- WHATEVER YOUR *IMPULSE* WAS, YOU *DIDN'T* ACT ON IT.

WHOEVER IS DOING THIS, YOU'LL GET THEM.

GUYS?

YES, ORACLE...?

IF YOU'RE ALL THROUGH WITH THE MALE BONDING...

DOES SHE HAVE TO LISTEN TO EVERYTHING?

YOU'D KNOW BETTER THAN I WOULD.

I HEARD THAT!

SO, IF EITHER OF YOU IS INTERESTED, THE RIDDLER JUST HIJACKED AN ARMORED CAR WITH ELEVEN MILLION IN CASH ONBOARD.

HE LEFT A NOTE.

"WHAT IS IT THAT HAS FOUR WHEELS, COSTS ELEVEN MILLION DOLLARS, AND FLIES?"

THE NIGHT AIR MIGHT CLEAR YOUR HEAD.

...

LET'S TAKE THE CAR.

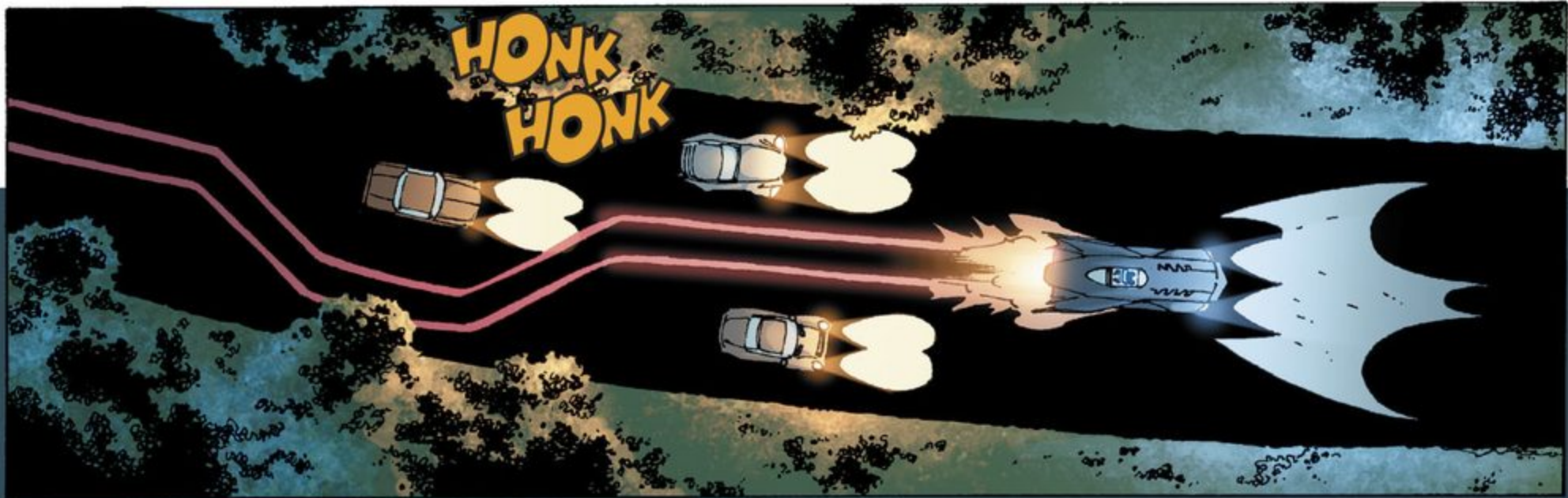


GREAT.

WHICH
ONE?



SO. WORD UNDER THE STREET IS YOU'RE SEEING CATWOMAN. ANY TRUTH IN THAT?







WELL,
BOYS, HAVE YOU
FIGURED OUT WHAT'S
GOT FOUR WHEELS,
COSTS ELEVEN
MILLION DOLLARS,
AND --



-- FLIES?!



Battering Ram
ENGAGED.

LISTEN,
BRUCE, IF YOU *DO*
DECIDE TO HAVE THAT
CONVERSATION
WITH HER...?

YOU MIGHT
WANT TO SHAVE
FIRST.



The first person
I ever revealed
my identity to was
Dick Grayson.

He was about the
same age I was
when **my** parents
were killed.

His parents --
circus acrobats --
had been murdered.

And I... wanted to
make a difference
in his life...



The way, if **my** parents
had lived, they would have
made a difference in mine...

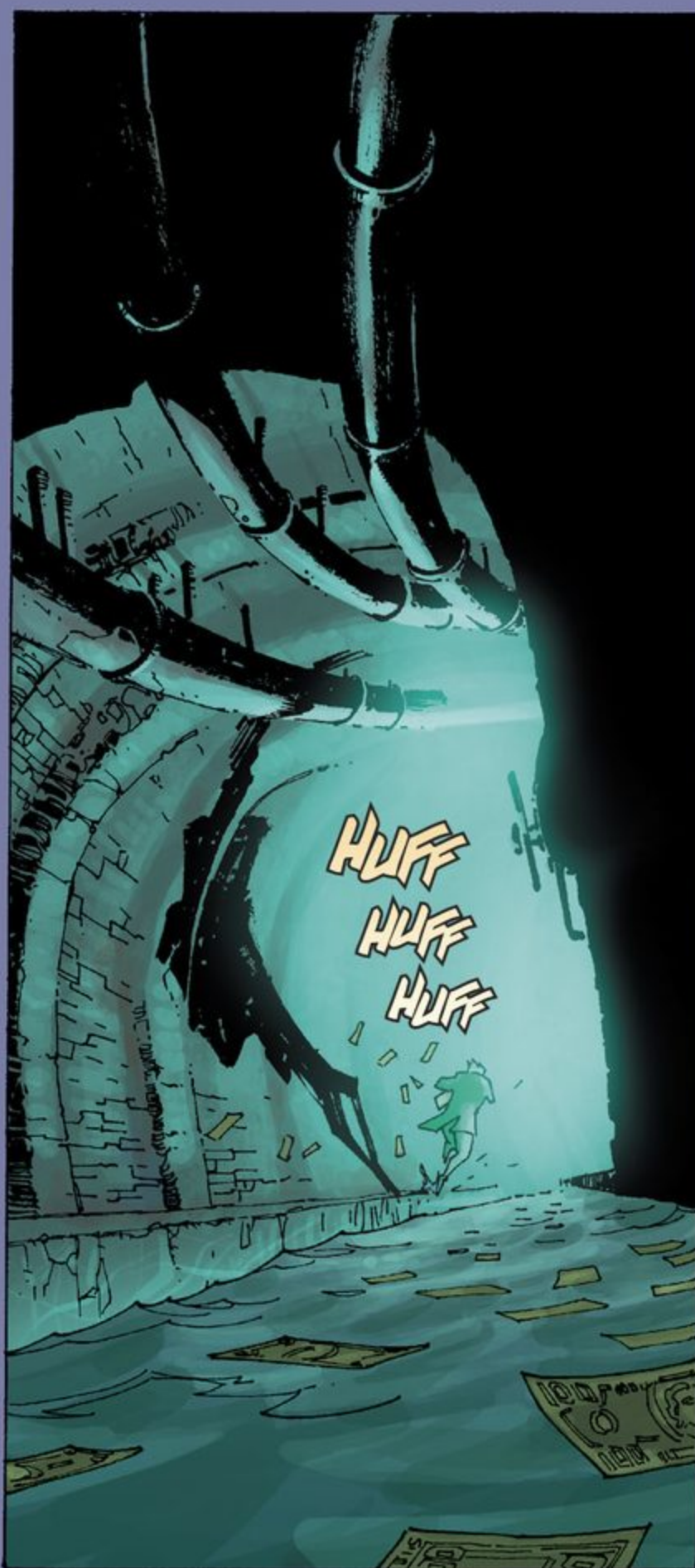




HUFF
HUFF
HUFF



HUFF
HUFF
HUFF



HUFF
HUFF
HUFF



HUFF
HUFF
HUFF



NNGGGNNNN



HA.

I think about *Edward Nigma* and the life he has had as *The Riddler*.

Where *once* his obsessive need to leave riddles as clues would confound me...

...everything about him has become routine.

A SOLID GOLD GARBAGE TRUCK...



HA-HA-HA-HA!



ER.

I half-expected him to have retired by now.





Someone has taken the time to infiltrate the lives of Poison Ivy, Killer Croc, Harley Quinn...

...even The Joker.

And yet, The Riddler has apparently been ignored.

NEED ANY HELP WITH THAT?
NO. I'VE GOT IT.



An armored car robbery -- even with eleven million in cash -- is *exactly* the sort of crime The Riddler has always taken on.

And the riddle, by his standards, was amateurish...

Why was he ignored? Was he somehow undeserving?

Activating ultraviolet.



Or... knowingly or otherwise... was he himself intended to be the riddle?



ANYTHING?

MAYBE. I'VE SEEN THIS SUBSTANCE BEFORE.
ASH.

FROM THE LAZARUS PIT...

As with everything, the answer lies somewhere in the details...

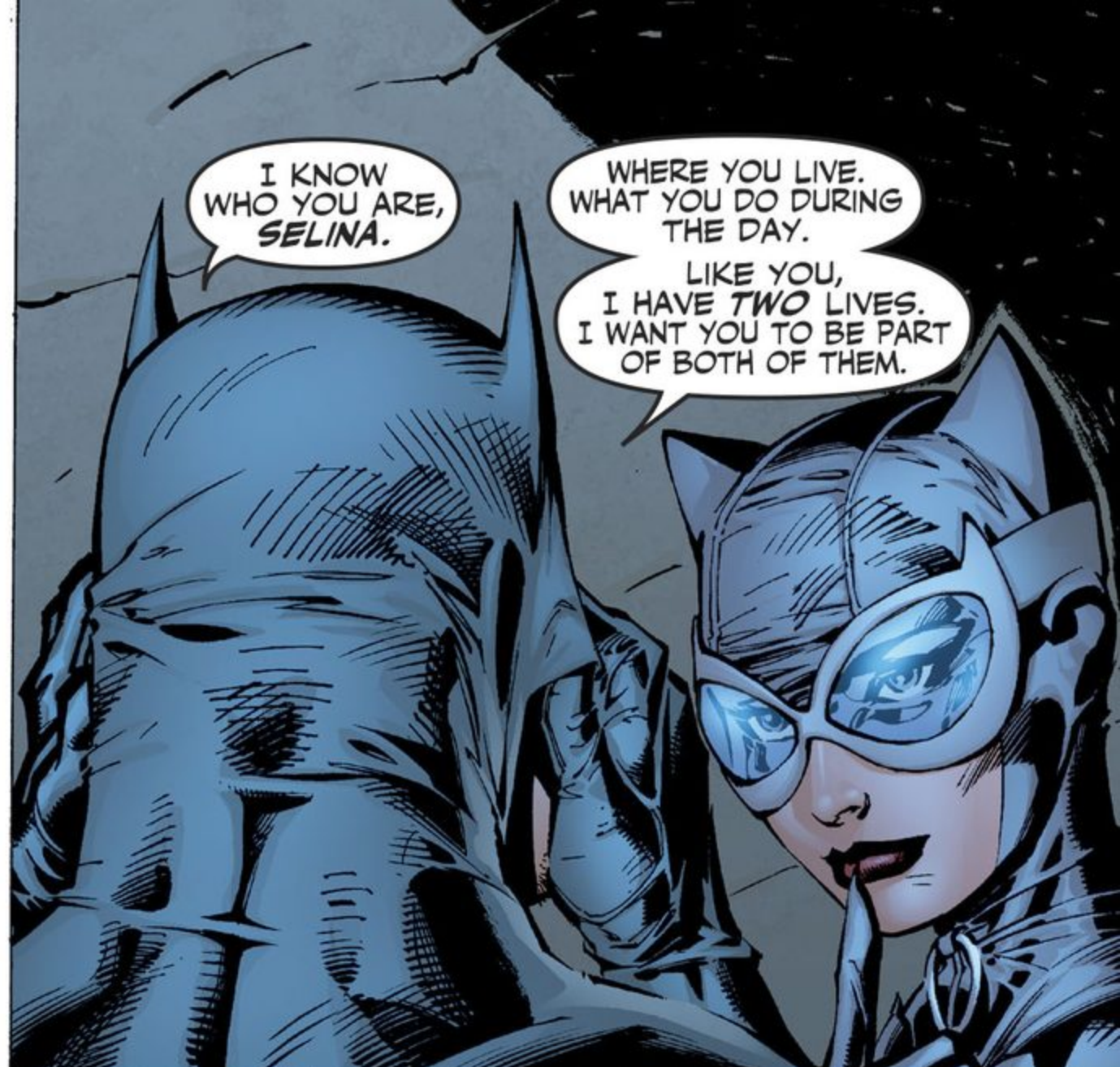




WAIT
A SECOND.
I KNOW THAT
VOICE.

YOU SHOULD.
WE GO WAY
BACK.

TO EVEN
BEFORE MY...
ACCIDENT.



I KNOW
WHO YOU ARE,
SELINA.

WHERE YOU LIVE.
WHAT YOU DO DURING
THE DAY.

LIKE YOU,
I HAVE *TWO* LIVES.
I WANT YOU TO BE PART
OF BOTH OF THEM.



YOU BROKE INTO
MY HOME ONE
CHRISTMAS.

BEAT ME UP
IN FRONT OF
MY WIFE.

THIS
ISN'T GOING TO
TURN OUT TO BE A
GOOD SURPRISE,
IS IT...



YOU KNOW,
FOR A LONER,
YOU CERTAINLY HAVE
YOURSELF A LOT
OF STRINGS.

NIGHTWING.
ROBIN. ORACLE.
HUNTRESS.
BATGIRL.

I JUST DON'T
WANT TO BE THE
ONE STRING THAT
TRIPS YOU UP.

YOU
WON'T.



SO, YOU HAD A LITTLE PLASTIC
SURGERY DONE --

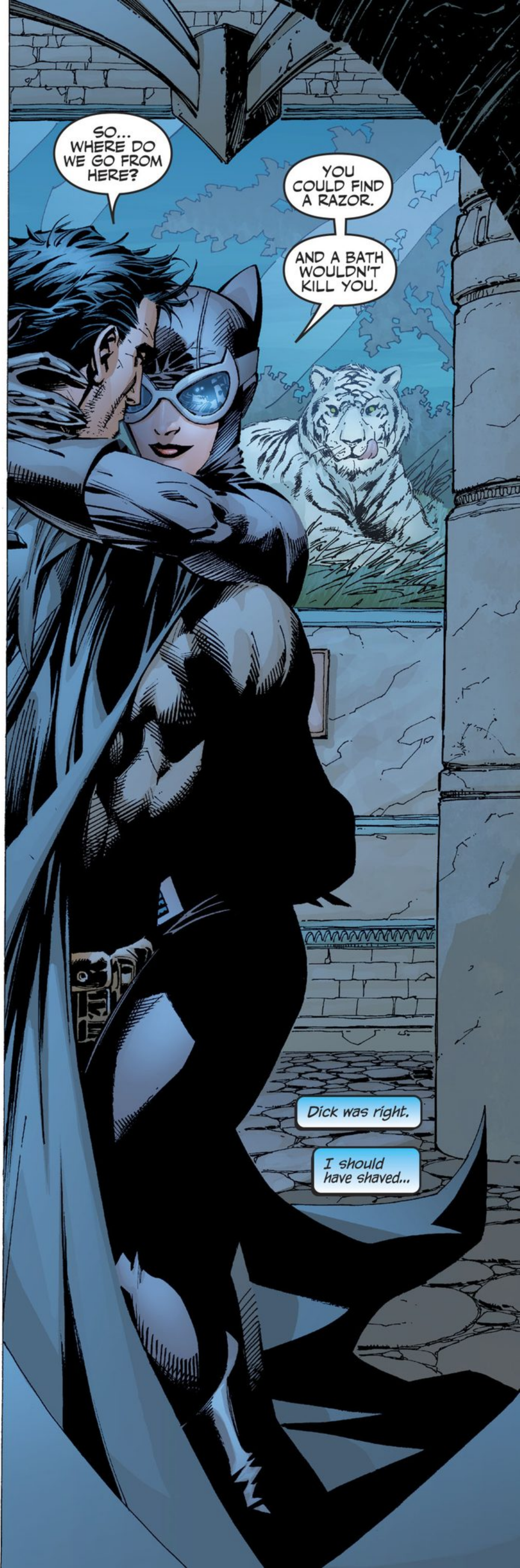
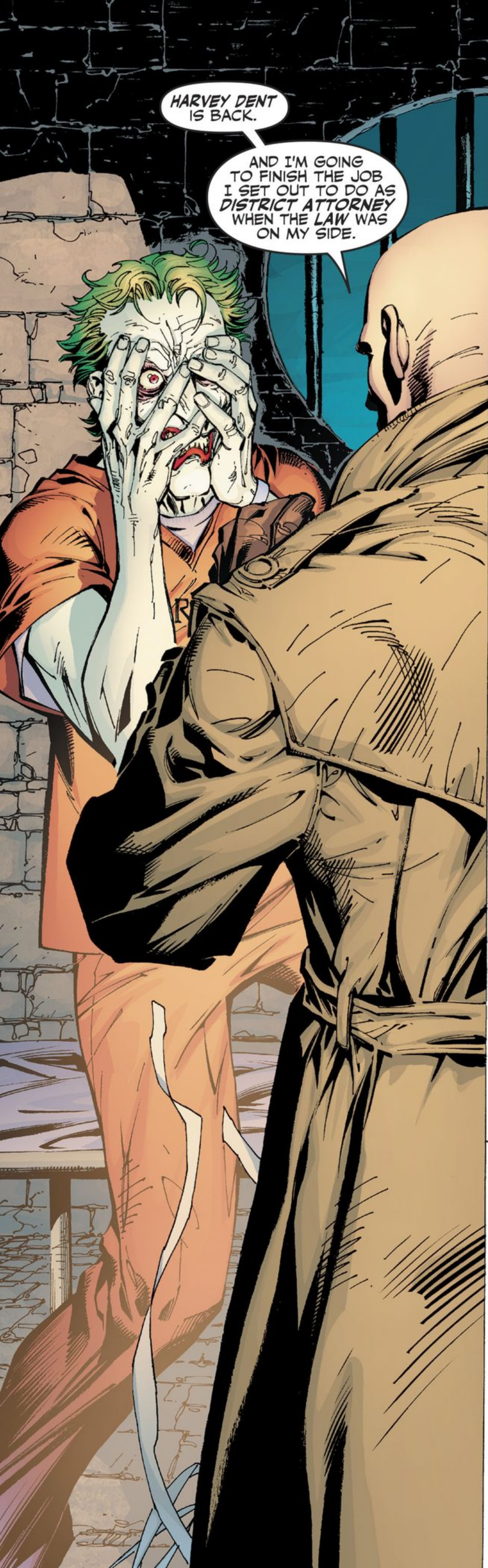
-- OKAY, A LOT OF
PLASTIC SURGERY DONE.
WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT --

SORRY.
TWO-FACE
IS GONE...

-- *TWO-FACE*?!

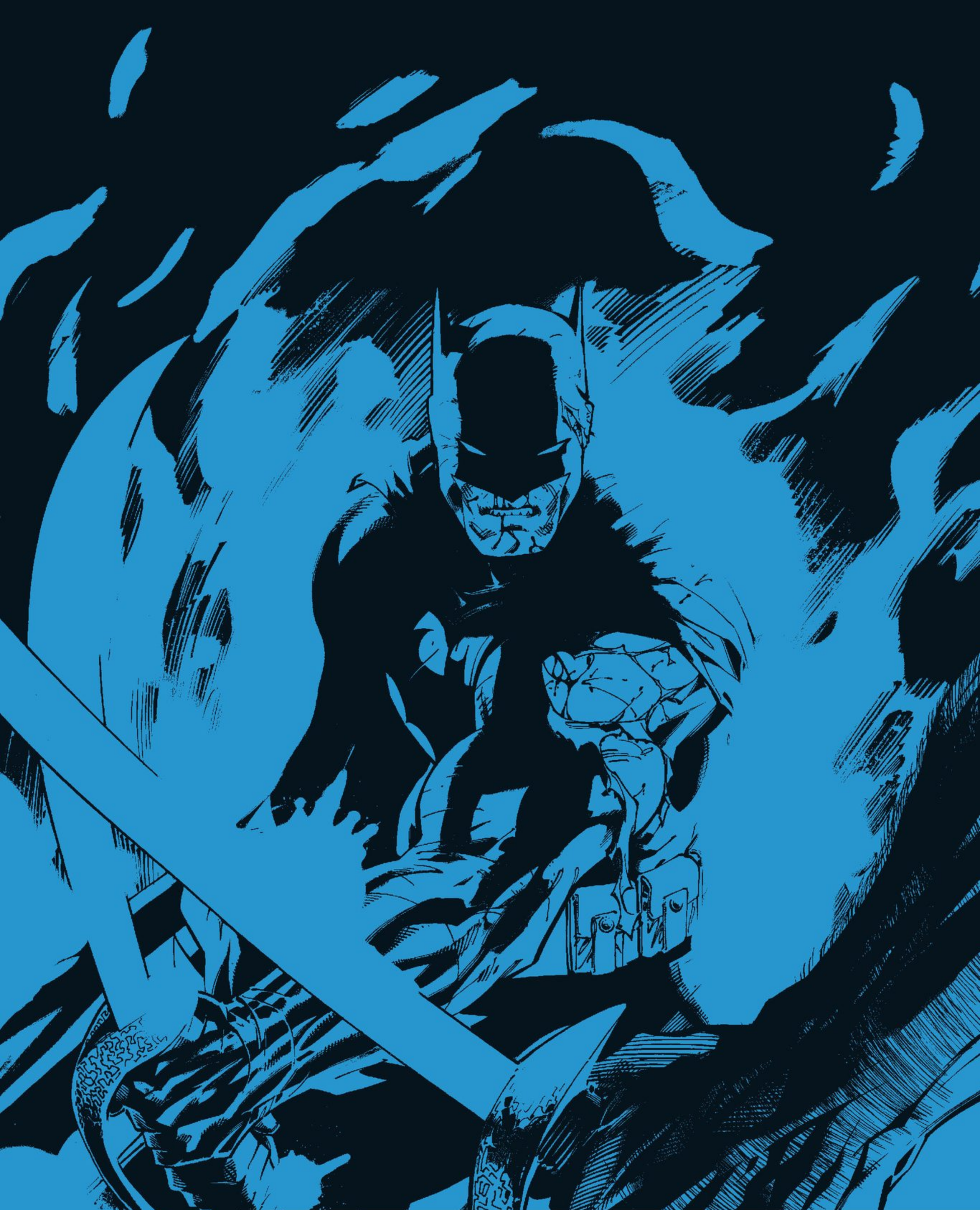


BRUCE.





J.M. LEE
WILLIAMS
2000



T H E A S S A S S I N S



One mile out from Metropolis.

Midnight.

METROPOLIS TOWER THIS IS LEXCORP ONE. CLIMBING NOW TO EIGHT THOUSAND FEET AND TURNING EAST OVER THE ATLANTIC.



ROGER, LEXCORP ONE. YOU'VE GOT CLEAR SKIES ALL THE WAY TO THIRTY THOUSAND FEET. HAVE A SAFE RIDE.

For months now, someone has been... on the attack.

Recruiting and educating my oldest foes in new and deadly ways.



WE COPY THAT, METROPOLIS. IT LOOKS LIKE SMOOTH SAILING FROM HERE ON IN...

ORACLE. I'M IN POSITION.

B. LISTEN TO ME. I KNOW HOW MUCH YOU WANT TO BRING THIS TO AN END.

That sort of operation requires time and money.

And as Bruce Wayne should know, there are only a handful of people who have enough of both.



BUT EVEN FOR YOU, THIS IS CRAZY. YOU'VE GOT CIVILIANS IN THERE, B.

YOU WILL TAKE THE WING CONTROLS IN THREE, TWO...

As a detective, my task was to narrow that list down to one suspect.

WILL YOU LISTEN TO ME?!

...ONE.



The time has come to take the battle back to its source.

OKAY, I'VE GOT THE WING. SHE'LL BE SAFELY RETURNED TO THE BASE, WHICH IS MORE THAN I CAN SAY FOR --

KEEP TO THE PLAN, O.

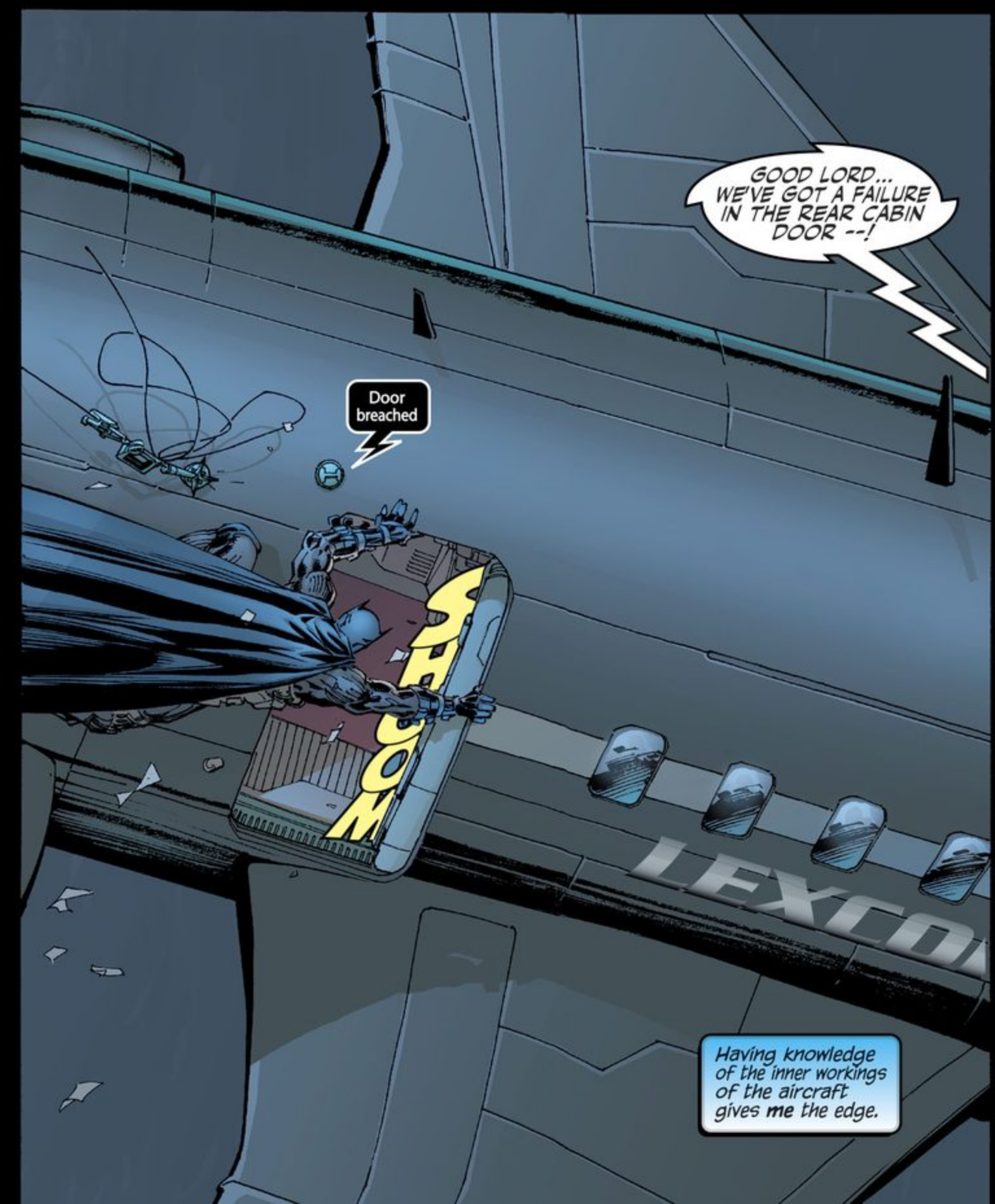


The LexCorp Gulf Stream 5 has the same specifications as WayneTech's Air Glide 3.

Lucius tells me that we'll be in court for years over patent infringement.

CHK

Door sealed



GOOD LORD... WE'VE GOT A FAILURE IN THE REAR CABIN DOOR --!

Door breached

Having knowledge of the inner workings of the aircraft gives me the edge.



It's one of the few times I'm grateful for the way LexCorp does business.

O. I'M IN.

AND I'M LESS THAN THRILLED AT JAMMING A DISTRESS CALL. EVEN THEIRS.

MAYDAY -- METROPOLIS TOWER -- THIS IS LEXCORP ONE. WE--VZZZZT--



Heat sensor activated.

Traveling at this velocity, an experienced pilot will decrease altitude as slowly as possible to counteract the loss of cabin pressure.



The bodyguards will have been instructed *not* to fire their weapons onboard to keep from rupturing the hull.



I have less than one minute to get in and out before the cabin door automatically reveals itself.



Heat sensor OFF.

But, by then, I will have taken what I came for.

ONLY YOU WOULD BE SO BRAZEN.



Only here would she be so vulnerable.

SLASH



YOUR MOVE.

BELOVED.

A full-page comic book illustration featuring Batman and Talia Head. Batman, in his iconic suit and cowl, is shown from the chest up, holding Talia Head. Talia has long, flowing brown hair and is wearing a white, form-fitting jumpsuit with a high collar and a gold belt buckle. She is looking directly at the viewer with a determined expression. The background is a dark, cloudy sky with a large, full moon. A large, dark, bat-like silhouette is visible in the upper left corner, and a small, dark, bat-like aircraft is flying in the lower right corner. The overall tone is dramatic and intense.

WHY ARE
YOU DOING
THIS?

*Talia Head.
Ra's al Ghul's
daughter.*



ASK YOUR
FATHER.

One night, years ago, Robin -- Dick Grayson before he became **Nightwing** -- was ambushed inside his dorm room.



MY
FATHER AND I
NO LONGER
SPEAK.

BUT,
YOU **KNEW**
THAT.

No one had seen or heard anything.
It was as though he just **vanished**.



ESTRANGED
OR **NOT**, HE WILL
NOT ALLOW FOR YOU
TO BE HURT.

Finally, I was contacted --
not as Batman,
but as **Bruce Wayne**.

UURNNN



YOU WILL
NEVER HURT ME,
MY LOVE.



I AM
NOT YOUR
"LOVE."

His kidnapper had uncovered my **secret identity** and challenged me to find and rescue Dick.

It turned out to be a **test** staged by her **father** to see if I was a worthy suitor for Talia.

UURROOOM

That is how I first met
Ra's al Ghul...

Oracle worries my actions this evening will have repercussions.

I'm counting on it.

MISTER PRESIDENT...!

The White House. Sometime after midnight.

Where -- as incredible as it sounds -- Lex Luthor is the President of The United States.

SIR... THERE'S BEEN A HIJACKING AND KIDNAPPING --

-- ABOARD LEXCORP ONE.

MISTER VICE PRESIDENT.

PETE. YOU KNOW HOW CAREFUL I HAVE TO BE REGARDING MY FORMER... HOLDINGS.

CORPORATE ESPIONAGE IS THE PRICE OF DOING BUSINESS. I'M SURPRISED THAT MS. HEAD --

IT WAS BATMAN, SIR.

WE HAVE CONFIRMATION THROUGH SATCOM.

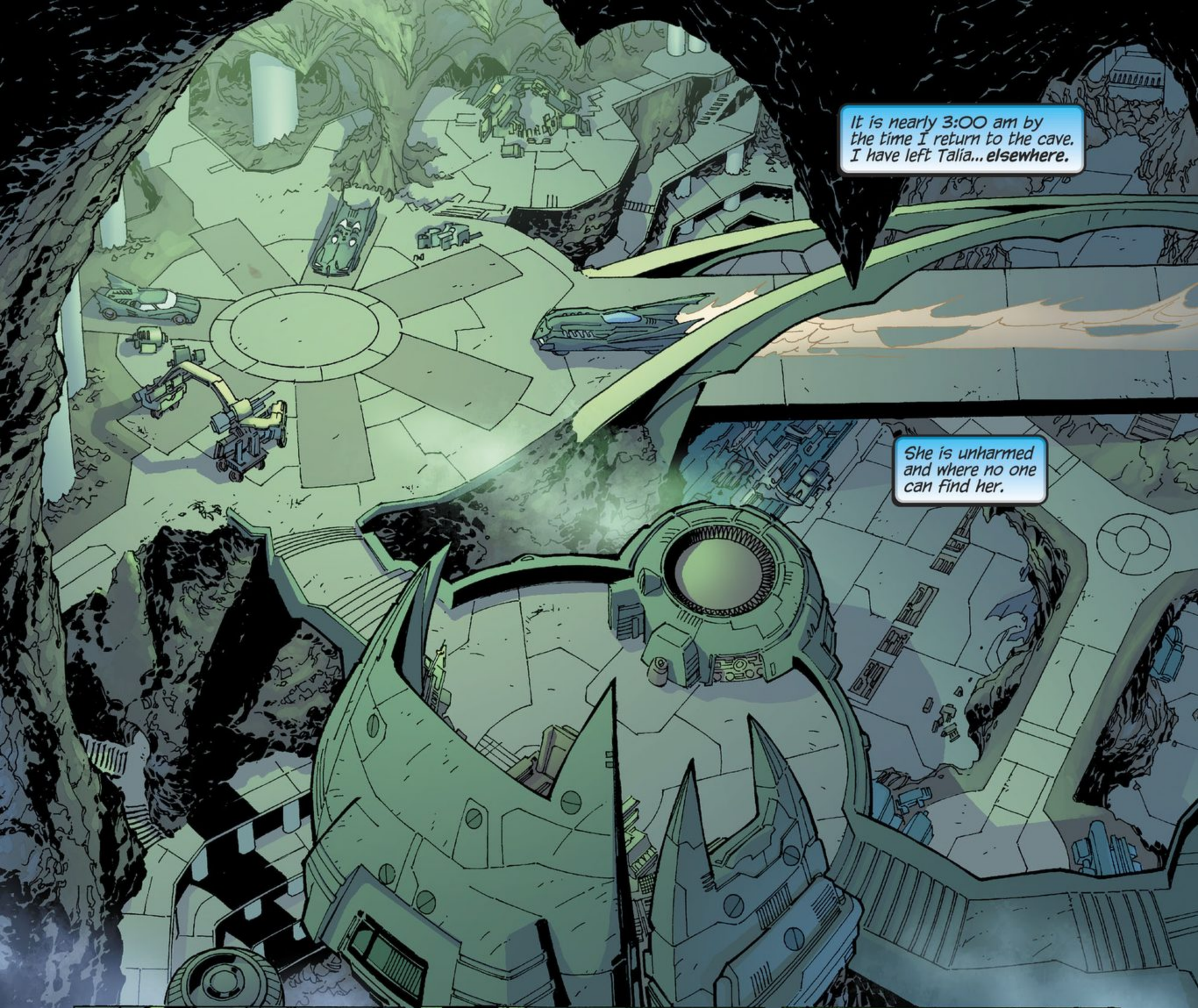
IT WAS SOME SORT OF BAT-SHAPED AIRCRAFT.

WITH A CLOAKING DEVICE MAKING IT ESSENTIALLY AN INVISIBLE PLANE.

DO YOU WISH TO TAKE ACTION?

NOT...

...YET.



It is nearly 3:00 am by the time I return to the cave. I have left Talia... elsewhere.

She is unharmed and where no one can find her.



My message has been received...

...However, Ra's has responded even more quickly than I expected.



If he -- accompanied by any of his League of Assassins were here, then --



ALFRED!



I have known Alfred Pennyworth my entire life.

He was hired by my father.

ALFRED!

And when my parents were **murdered**, he assumed, as best as anyone could, their role...

To strike at me through him...

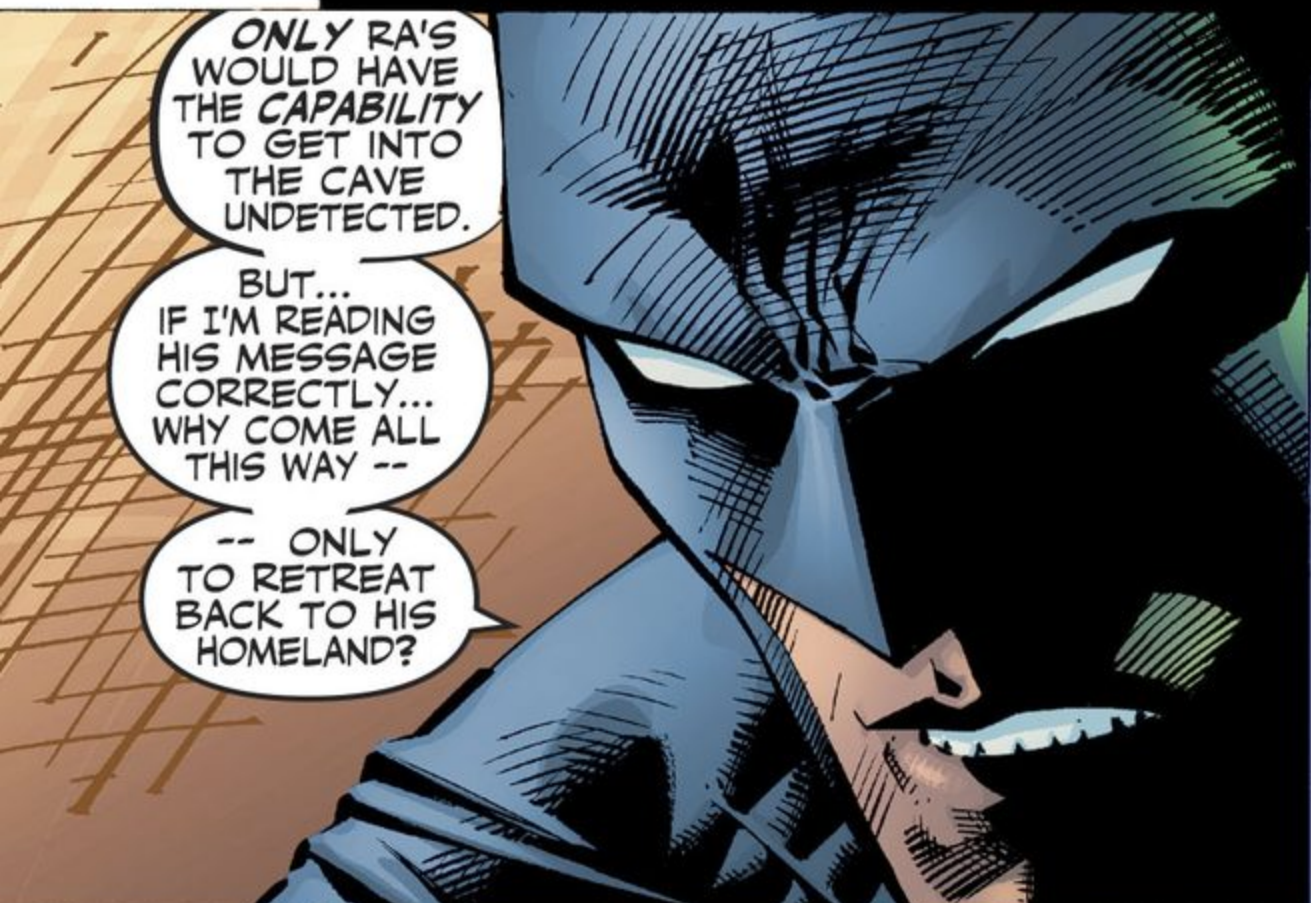


SIR...?

YOU'RE... **HERE**. SAFE.

SPEAKING TO THE WORLD'S GREATEST DETECTIVE, IT WOULD BE NEGLECTFUL OF ME NOT TO POINT OUT --

-- YOU ARE CORRECT, SIR.



ONLY RA'S WOULD HAVE THE **CAPABILITY** TO GET INTO THE CAVE UNDETECTED.

BUT... IF I'M READING HIS MESSAGE CORRECTLY... WHY COME ALL THIS WAY --

-- ONLY TO RETREAT BACK TO HIS HOMETLAND?



I'M CERTAIN THAT YOUR MUSINGS WERE MORE **RHETORICAL** IN NATURE, SIR, BUT FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH...

PERHAPS HE WISHES TO DRAW YOU BACK THERE WITH HIM...



...AND IN DOING SO, LEAVE **SOMETHING** OR **SOMEONE** IN GOTHAM CITY UNPROTECTED...

I have no choice. There is too much at stake. Is that what Ra's is counting on?

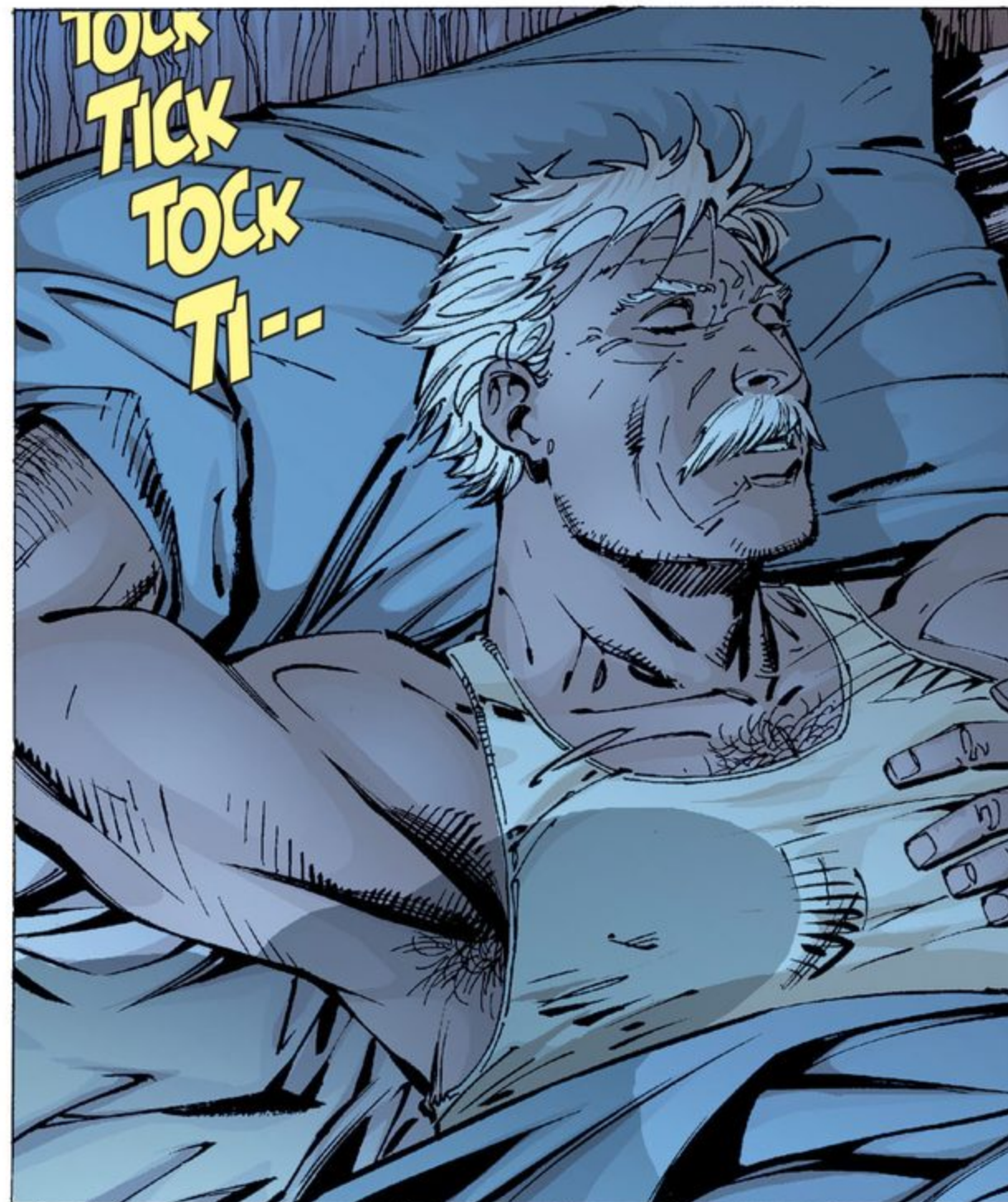


Jim Gordon's home.

The Former Police Commissioner.



TICK
TOCK
TICK



TICK
TICK
TOCK
TI--



HANDS IN
THE AIR.

YOU
THINK YOU CAN
BREAK INTO MY
HOME --



PUT THE
GUN DOWN,
JIMBO.

I JUST
WANT TO
TALK.

TWO-FACE...!

NO.
IT'S ME.

HARVEY
DENT.



THE MAN I KNEW
AS HARVEY DENT
IS DEAD.

HE WAS LOST TO
A DERANGED LUNATIC
NAMED TWO-FACE.

IS THAT
HOW IT IS,
JIMBO?

NO SECOND
CHANCES?

IN YOUR
CASE, YOU'VE
GOTTEN SECOND,
THIRD, AND FOURTH
CHANCES, AND YOU
BURNED THEM
ALL.

OKAY,
I DESERVED THAT.
BUT I DIDN'T COME
HERE TONIGHT
FOR ME.



IT'S BATS.

HE NEEDS
OUR HELP. NOW,
MORE THAN EVER.

IT'S GOING
TO TAKE A LITTLE
MORE THAN SOME
PLASTIC SURGERY
TO MAKE ME
BELIEVE YOU'VE
CHANGED SIDES.

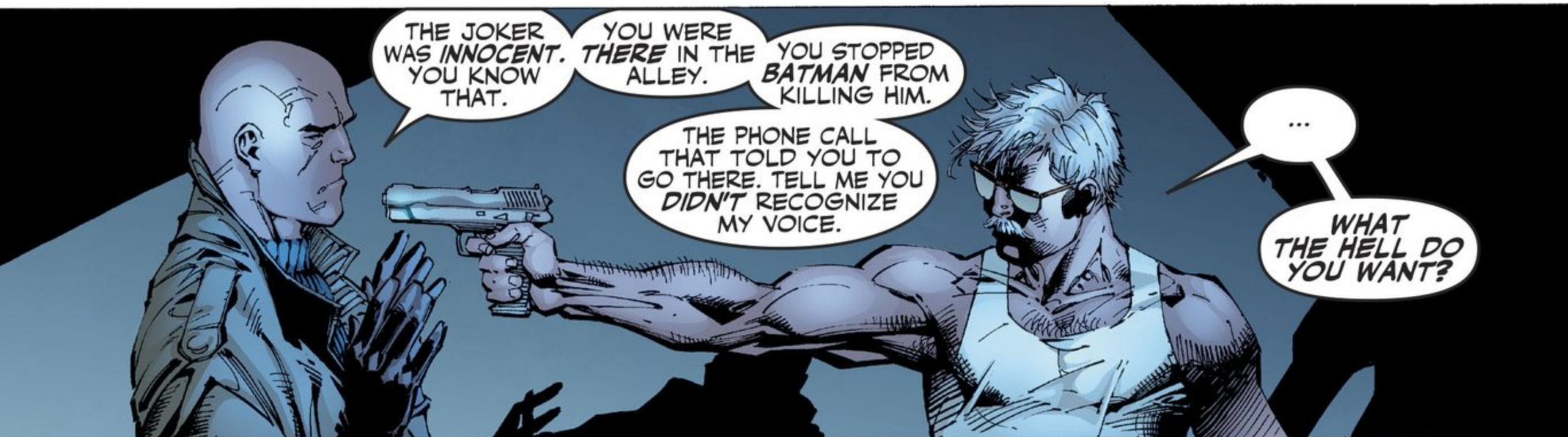
I HEARD ABOUT
THAT STUNT YOU
PULLED OUT
AT ARKHAM.
GETTING
THE JOKER
RELEASED.

POSING
AS HIS
ATTORNEY.

I'VE HAD MY
LICENSE REINSTATED
BY THE STATE.

THAT'S NOT
POSSIBLE.

IS IT?



THE JOKER
WAS INNOCENT.
YOU KNOW
THAT.

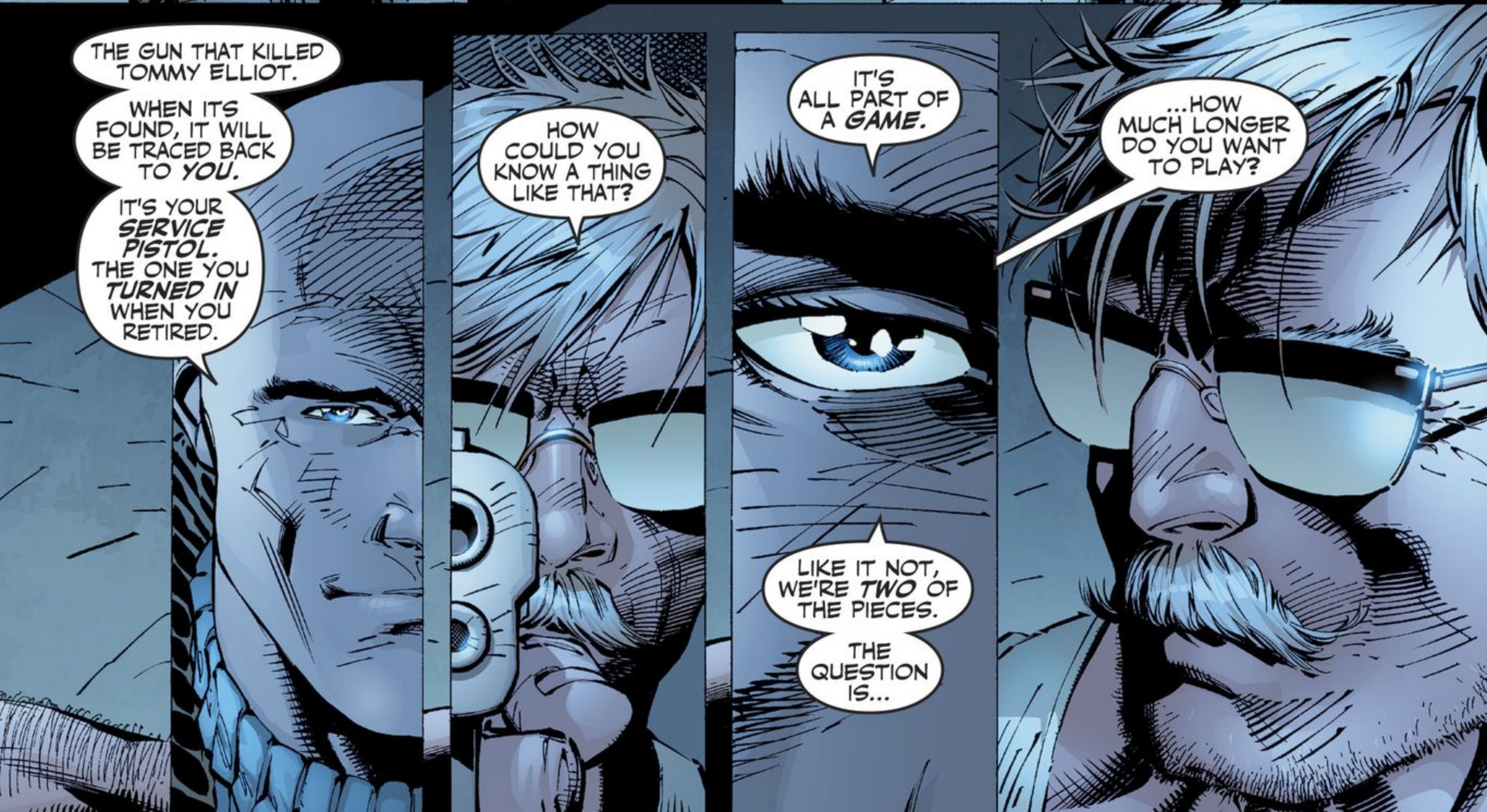
YOU WERE
THERE IN THE
ALLEY.

YOU STOPPED
BATMAN FROM
KILLING HIM.

THE PHONE CALL
THAT TOLD YOU TO
GO THERE. TELL ME YOU
DIDN'T RECOGNIZE
MY VOICE.

...

WHAT
THE HELL DO
YOU WANT?



THE GUN THAT KILLED
TOMMY ELLIOT.

WHEN IT'S
FOUND, IT WILL
BE TRACED BACK
TO YOU.

IT'S YOUR
SERVICE
PISTOL.
THE ONE YOU
TURNED IN
WHEN YOU
RETIRED.

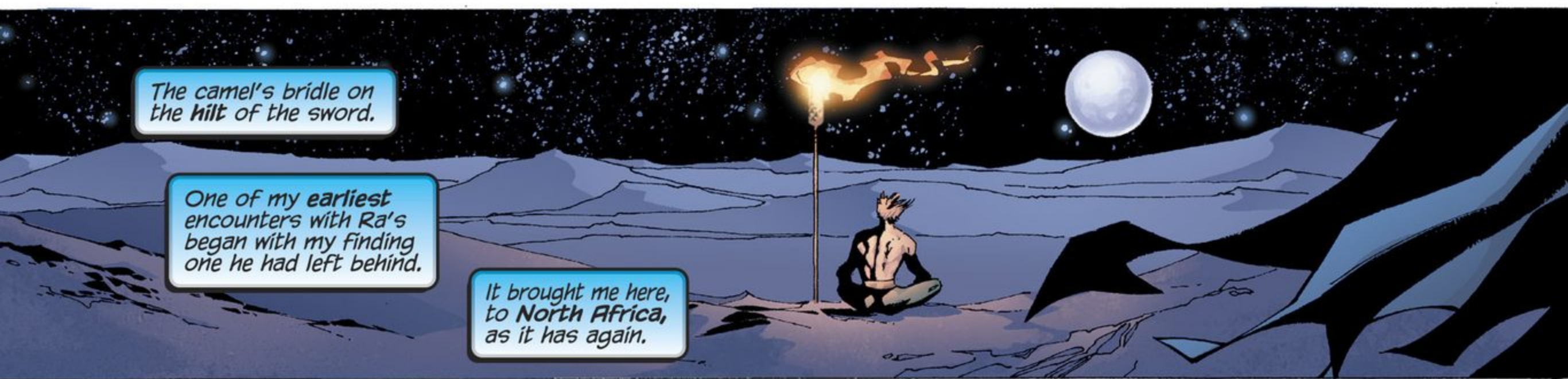
HOW
COULD YOU
KNOW A THING
LIKE THAT?

IT'S
ALL PART OF
A GAME.

...HOW
MUCH LONGER
DO YOU WANT
TO PLAY?

LIKE IT NOT,
WE'RE TWO OF
THE PIECES.

THE
QUESTION
IS...



The camel's bridle on the hilt of the sword.

One of my earliest encounters with Ra's began with my finding one he had left behind.

It brought me here, to North Africa, as it has again.



WHERE IS MY DAUGHTER...

...DETECTIVE?



SAFE.



YOU *THINK* I AM RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR RECENT...

...MISFORTUNES. THE DEATH OF YOUR FRIEND *THOMAS ELLIOT*, FOR EXAMPLE.

YOU ARE MISTAKEN.

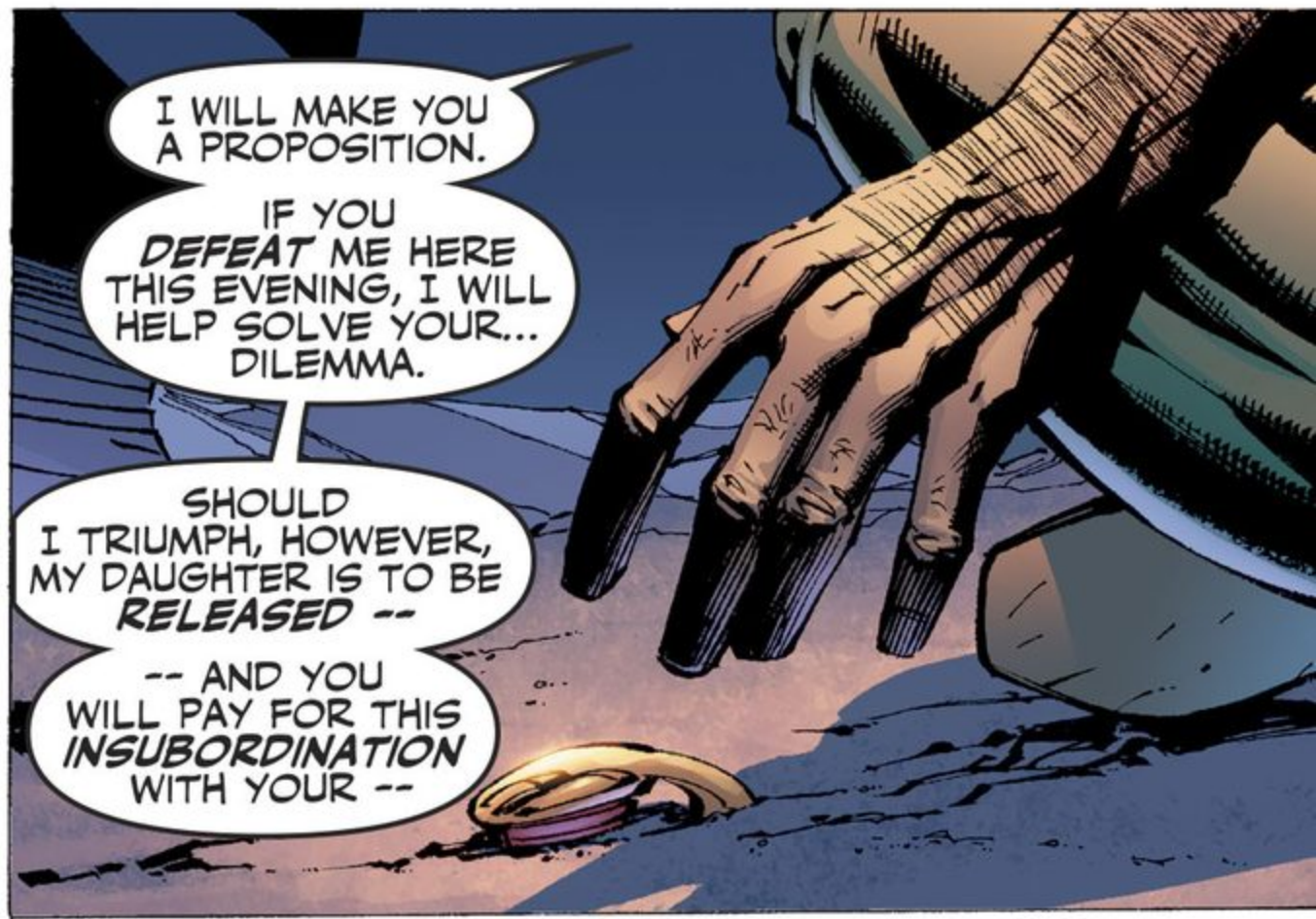


YOU HAVE MEANS.

OPPORTUNITY.

AND KNOWLEDGE ONLY A FEW POSSESS...

...ABOUT MY PERSONAL LIFE.



I WILL MAKE YOU A PROPOSITION.

IF YOU *DEFEAT* ME HERE THIS EVENING, I WILL HELP SOLVE YOUR... DILEMMA.

SHOULD I TRIUMPH, HOWEVER, MY DAUGHTER IS TO BE *RELEASED* --

-- AND YOU WILL PAY FOR THIS *INSUBORDINATION* WITH YOUR --



Intentionally or not, Ra's reminded me of when my childhood friend, Tommy Elliot, and I would play war with small pewter figures.



How Tommy would chastise me for not thinking like my opponent -- acting as the enemy would.

SO. APPARENTLY A LEOPARD CAN CHANGE ITS SPOTS.

WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR AMERICAN WAY OF WAITING FOR YOUR OPPONENT TO BE READY?

Ra's has never -- would never -- relent in his attack.



PERHAPS MY METAPHOR WAS INAPPROPRIATE.



NOT A LEOPARD, BUT A SNAKE THAT HAS SHED HIS SKIN, REVEALING HIS TRUE SELF.

THEN, COME, DETECTIVE. SHOW ME WHAT YOU HAVE BECOME.

I cannot give up my ground. I've put too much at risk...



Selina...

Back in Gotham City.

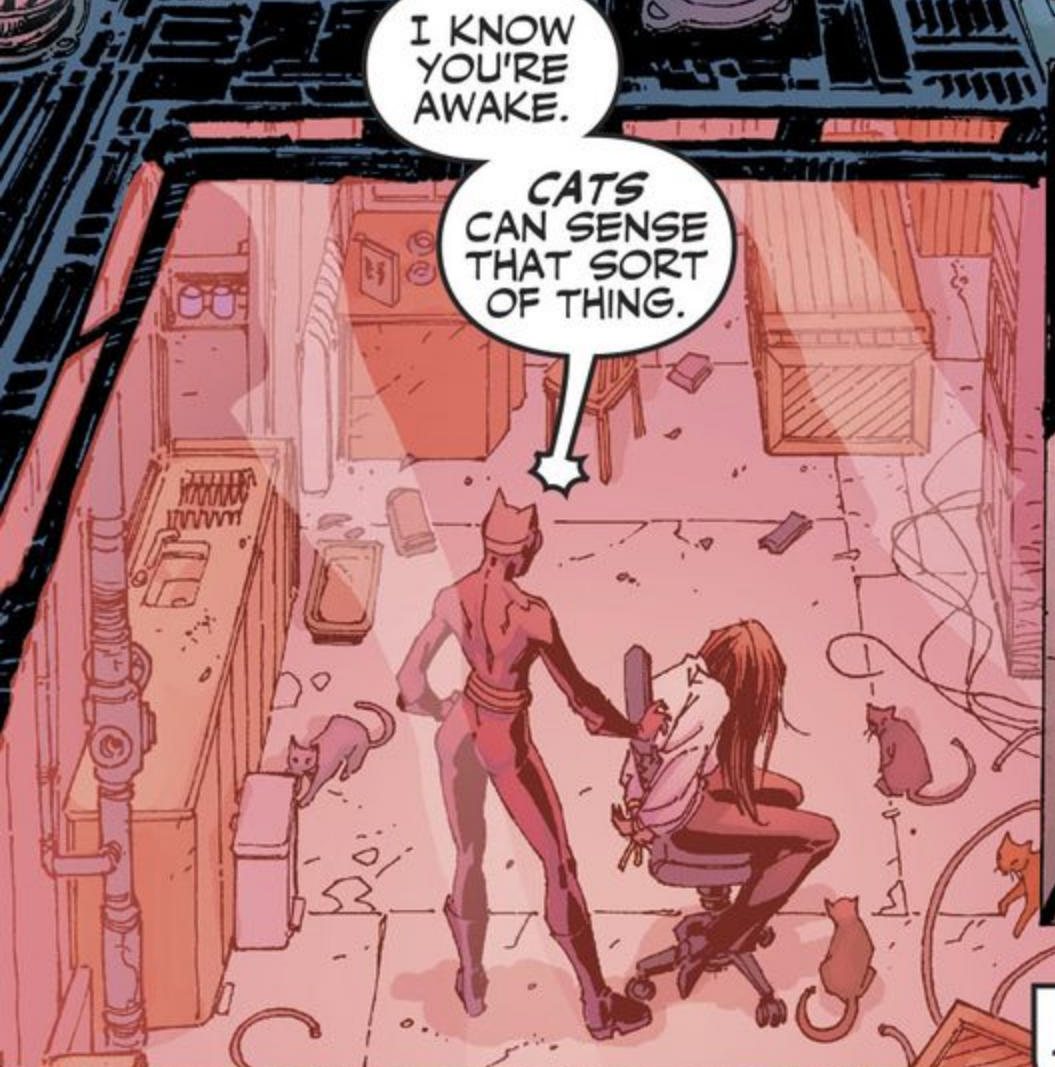


I CAN
SMELL HIM
ON YOU.



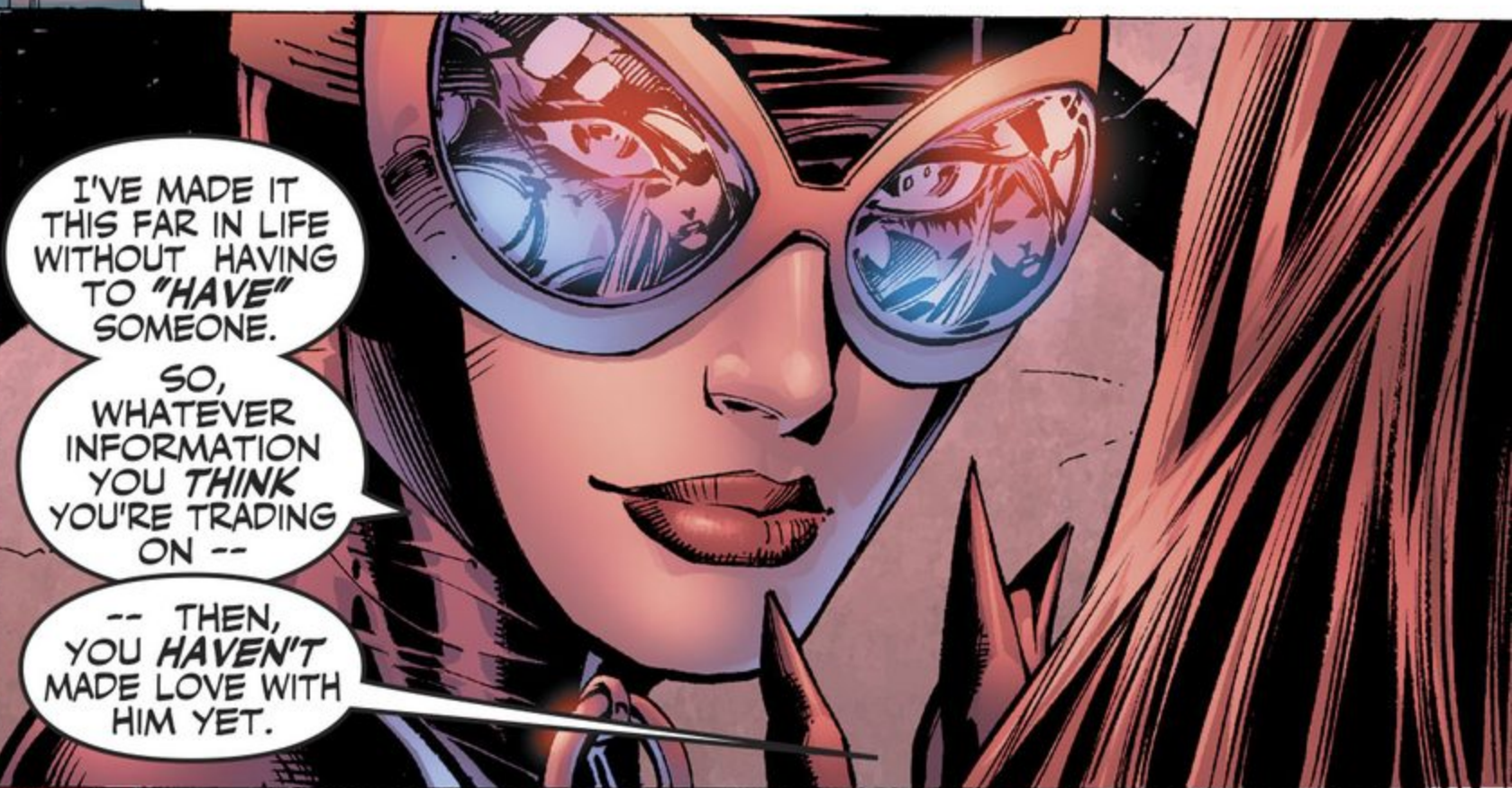
LOVERS
CAN SENSE
THAT SORT OF
THING.

YOU CAN
NEVER HAVE HIM,
YOU KNOW.



I KNOW
YOU'RE
AWAKE.

CATS
CAN SENSE
THAT SORT OF
THING.



I'VE MADE IT
THIS FAR IN LIFE
WITHOUT HAVING
TO "HAVE"
SOMEONE.

SO,
WHATEVER
INFORMATION
YOU *THINK*
YOU'RE TRADING
ON --

-- THEN,
YOU *HAVEN'T*
MADE LOVE WITH
HIM YET.



I OFFERED
TO BABYSIT
YOU.

HIDE YOU
WHERE *DADDY*
CAN'T FIND
YOU.

THEN YOU *BOTH*
HAVE FOOLISHLY
UNDERESTIMATED
MY FATHER.

THERE WEREN'T ANY *SPECIFIC*
INSTRUCTIONS THAT SAID I
COULDN'T *GAG* YOU.



RELEASE
HER --

OH,
HELL...

I did *not* have to ask.
When Selina realized what
I intended to do...

... She told me she
would keep Talia
out of reach.



-- AND I
WILL SPARE
YOUR LIFE.

GNNNH



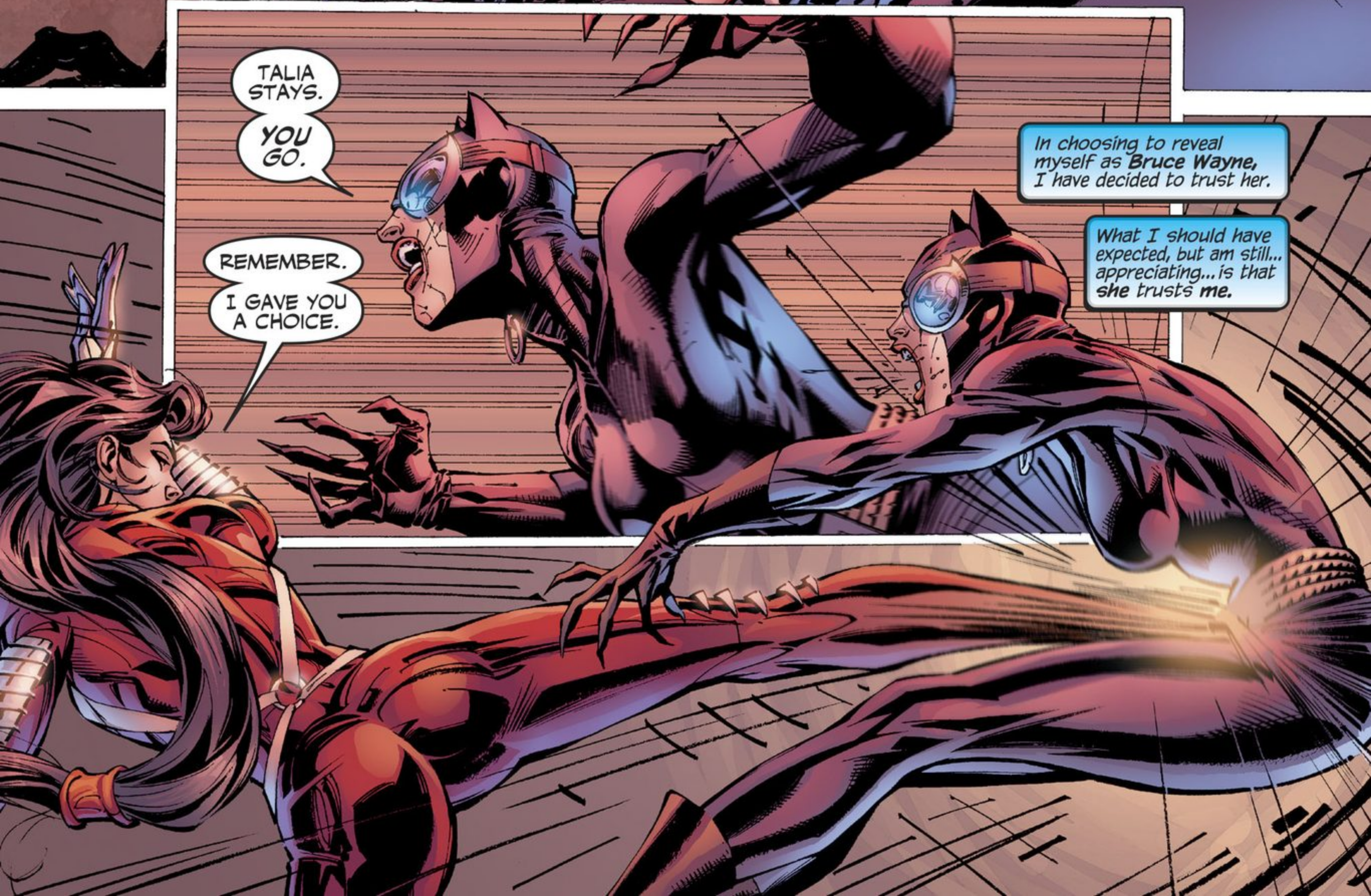
LADY SHIVA.

WHAT AN
UNPLEASANT
SURPRISE.

I could have used Dick.
Gone to Blüdhaven.
But, Selina put it simply --

"If we're going to be
in each other's lives...

"... We need to be
in each other's lives."



TALIA
STAYS.

YOU
GO.

REMEMBER.

I GAVE YOU
A CHOICE.

In choosing to reveal
myself as Bruce Wayne,
I have decided to trust her.

What I should have
expected, but am still...
appreciating... is that
she trusts me.



I cannot --
will not --
fail her trust.

YOU'VE
CERTAINLY FOUND
THE *PASSION* FOR
THE GAME.

WHOEVER HAS
MANIPULATED YOU
INTO THIS FRAME OF MIND,
THEY ARE TO BE
COMMENDED.



THIS.

IS.

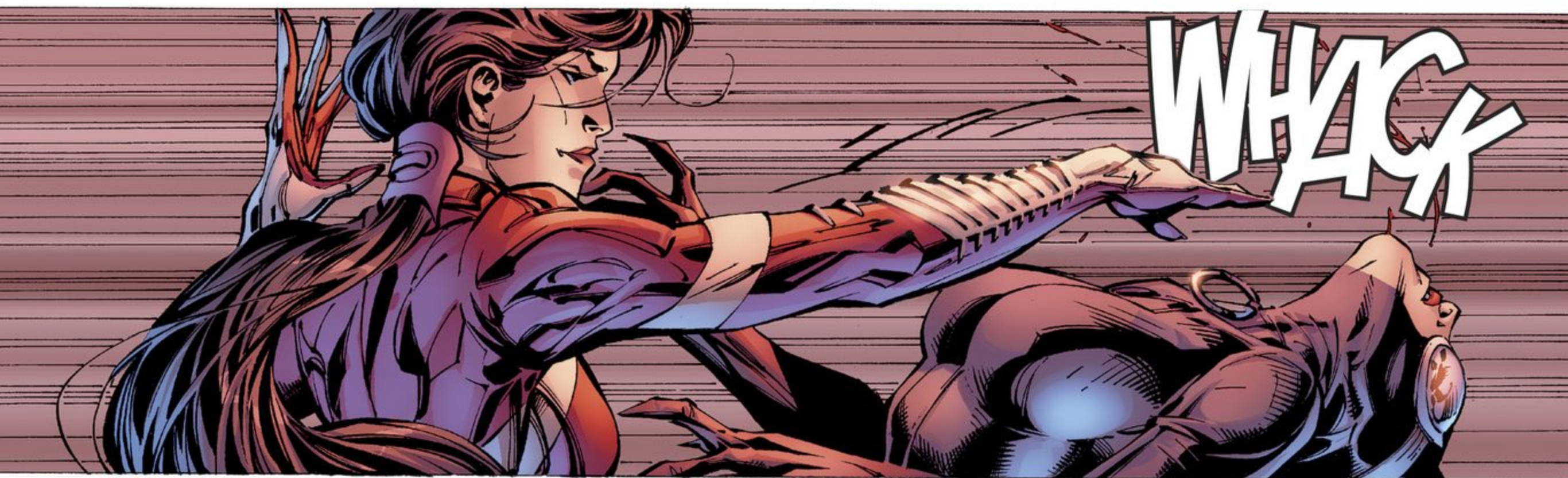
NOT.

A.



SLASH

GAME!





Think like the enemy.



And to do so...
without becoming
the enemy.

IT
IS OVER,
RA'S.
NOW --
TELL ME.



THE TIME IT WILL
TAKE FOR YOUR
ASSASSINS TO
STOP ME --

-- YOU
COULD
SPEND
GETTING TO
MEDICAL
HELP...

...OR TO
A LAZARUS
PIT.

WELL
PLAYED,
DETECTIVE.



I HAVE ENTERTAINED
YOU THIS EVENING
BECAUSE WE SEEK
THE SAME PERSON
WHOSE IDENTITY I
DO NOT KNOW.

SO, YOU SEE...
YOUR PROBLEM
HAS BECOME MY
PROBLEM...

...AND
IT SUITS
ME TO HAVE
YOU SOLVE
IT FOR US
BOTH.



SEVERAL MONTHS AGO,
ONE OF THE FEW REMAINING
LAZARUS PITS WAS DEFILED.

AS YOU KNOW,
ONCE THE LIFE-
RESTORING
ENERGIES
HAVE BEEN
TAPPED,
THE PIT
ITSELF IS
RENDERED
USELESS.

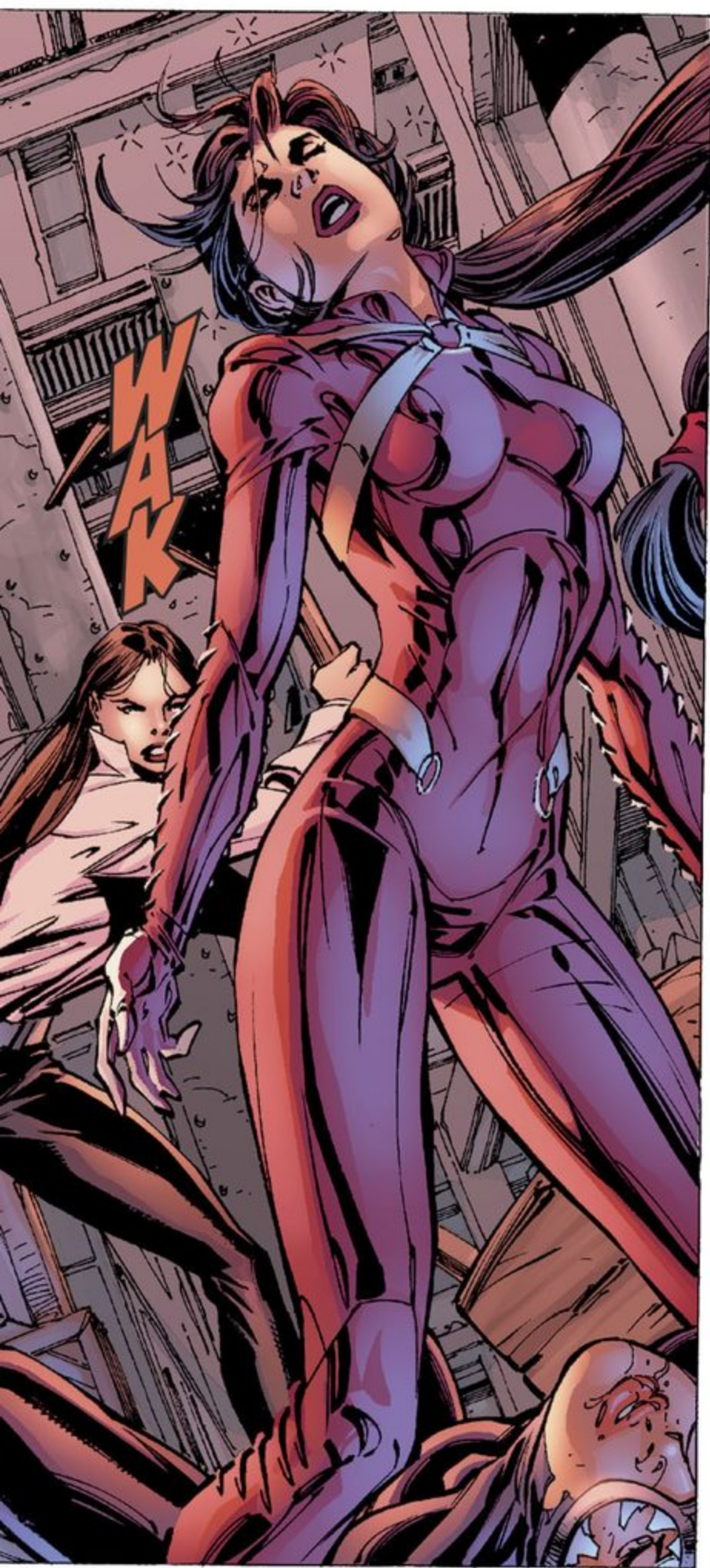


ASK YOURSELF,
DETECTIVE...

...WHO IN YOUR
LIFE WOULD WISH TO
COME BACK FROM
THE DEAD?

I must return
to Gotham City.







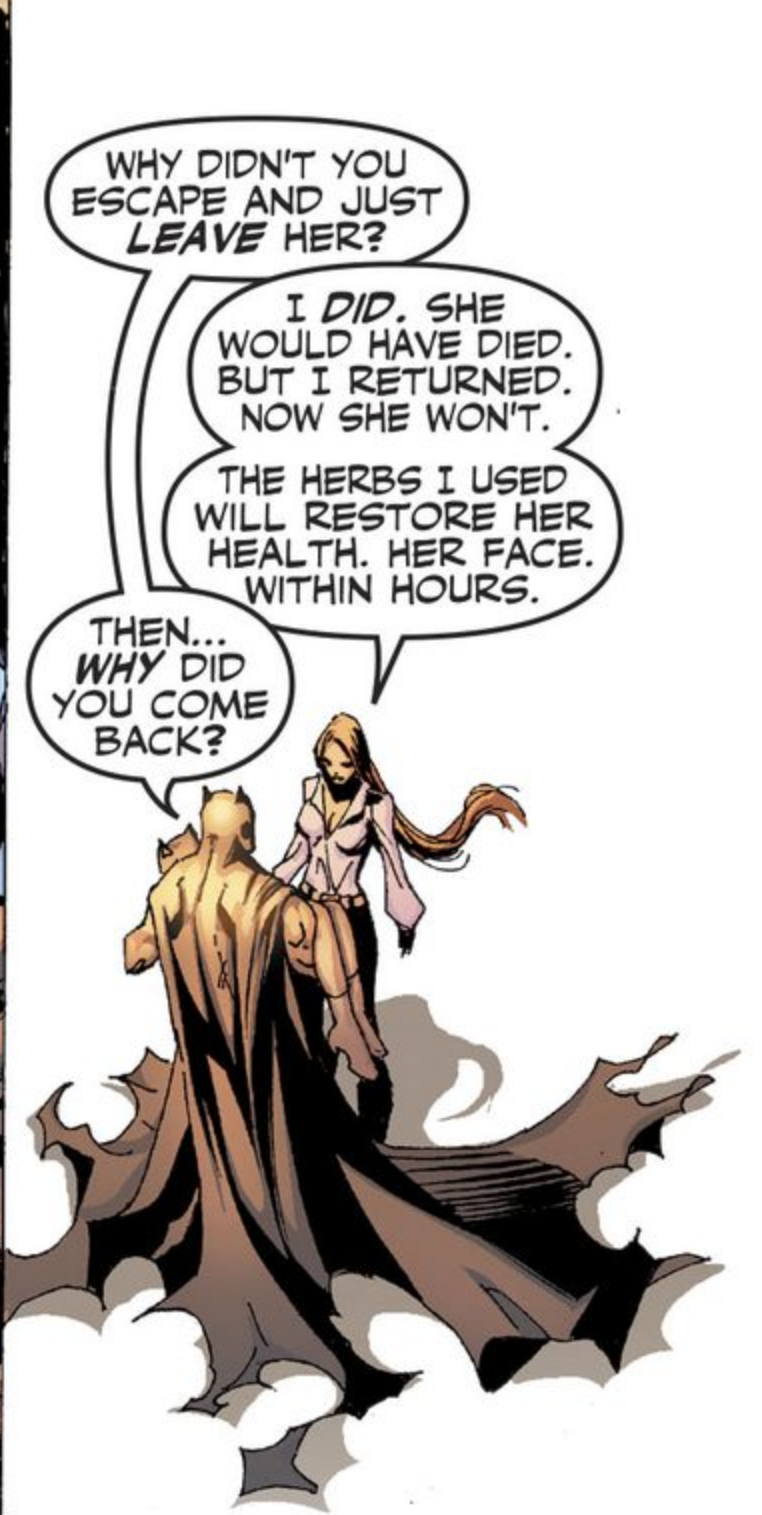
I am too late.



WHO DID THIS?



IN CERTAIN WAYS... YOU DID.



WHY DIDN'T YOU ESCAPE AND JUST LEAVE HER?

I DID. SHE WOULD HAVE DIED. BUT I RETURNED. NOW SHE WON'T.

THE HERBS I USED WILL RESTORE HER HEALTH. HER FACE. WITHIN HOURS.

THEN... WHY DID YOU COME BACK?



I TOLD YOU RECENTLY THERE WAS SOMETHING DIFFERENT ABOUT YOU.

NOW, I KNOW WHY.

YOU CARE FOR HER. MAYBE... EVEN LOVE HER.



YOUR MYSTERIOUS OPPONENT KNOWS THIS AND WILL USE THAT AGAINST YOU.

IS SHE WORTH IT?



...YES...





INTERLUDE:
THE CAVE



I have made a decision to bring Catwoman back to the cave.

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP?

I did not do this cavalierly. The cave... in so many ways... is my most private place.



AS SOON AS ALFRED IS DONE, THERE'LL BE WORK TO DO.

YES, BECAUSE TAKING TIME FOR THIS TO HEAL WOULD BE OUT OF THE QUESTION.

I BET YOU HAVE TO DO THIS PRETTY OFTEN...?



NO.

CONSTANTLY.

I tell myself that her perspective on the case may shed some light where there otherwise is none.



OH, GOD...

SOMETHING WRONG?

After all, cats can see in the dark...



I JUST...DIDN'T EXPECT...

...THE SCARS.

EACH OF THEM... CARRIES A MEMORY.

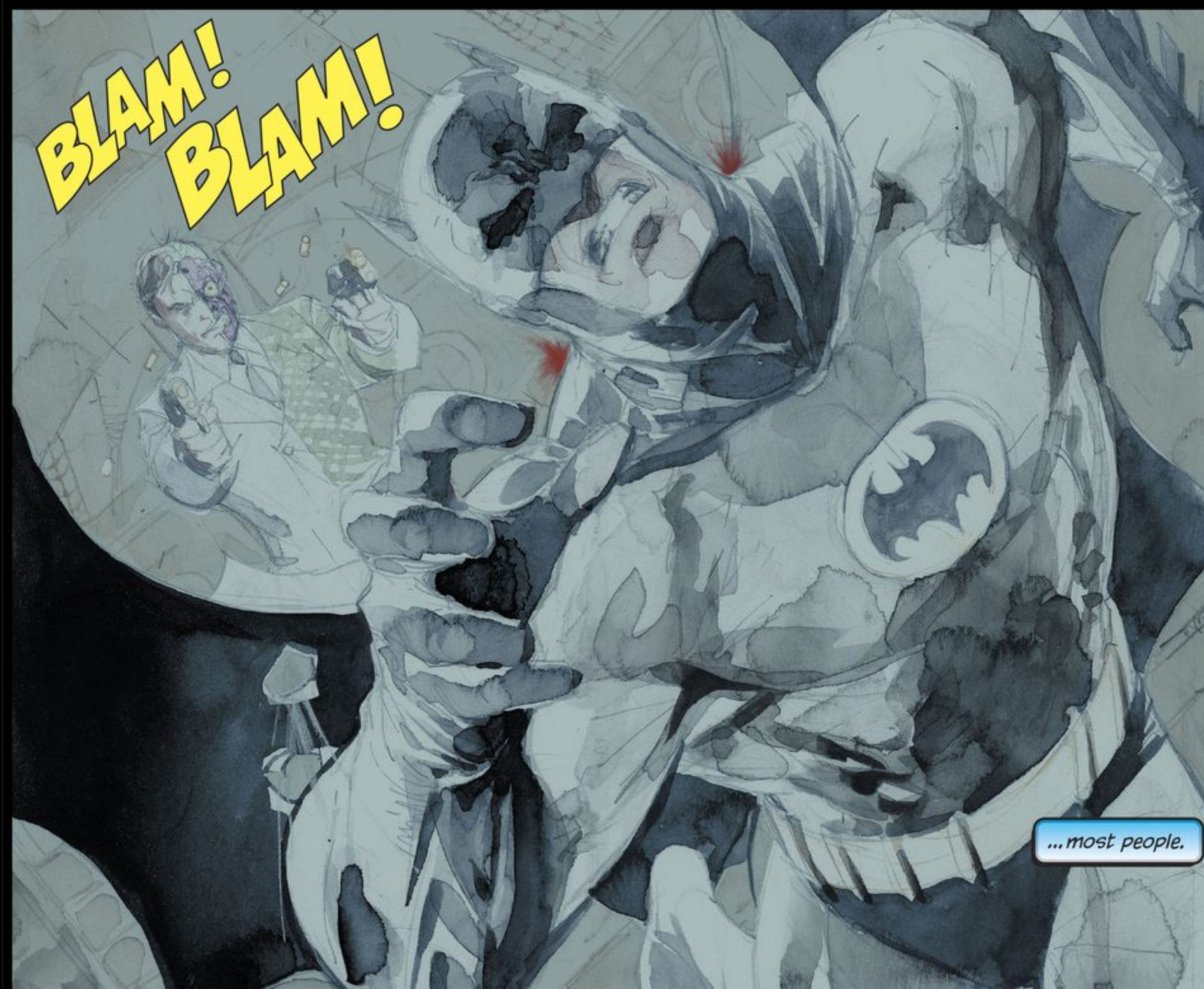
MOST PEOPLE OPT FOR A PHOTO ALBUM.

I am not...



...nor will I ever be...

HA HA HA HEHE HAHE



BLAM! BLAM!

...most people.



AND... THAT...?

YOU DON'T REMEMBER...?

But... if I'm going to trust her. As I have chosen to do so...

...it has to be completely...



But after tonight...
the cave... seems a
little less cold...

WE
HAVE WORK
TO DO.

Interlude
THE CAVE





SO MUCH PAIN...

WHY DOES HE KEEP DOING IT?

IT...IS DIFFICULT TO SAY.



DO YOU THINK *HED* TELL ME?

MISS KYLE. HIS *TRUST* IS NOT SOMETHING ONE CAN STEAL FROM A MUSEUM LATE AT NIGHT.

CAREFUL, MISTER PENNYWORTH. I'VE SCRATCHED MEN'S EYES OUT FOR TAKING THAT TONE WITH ME.



YES, I IMAGINE YOU HAVE.

WHILE I HAVE SEWN HIS FLESH, SET HIS BONES, AND REMOVED MORE SPENT BULLETS FROM HIS BODY THAN I CARE TO REMEMBER...

...THERE IS *ONE* THING I WOULDN'T HAVE THE SLIGHTEST CLUE HOW TO MEND.



NOW, YOU'VE PIQUED MY CURIOSITY.



A BROKEN HEART.

I HOPE YOU UNDERSTAND HOW TRULY EXTRAORDINARY IT IS FOR HIM TO SHARE HIS SECRETS WITH YOU.

INCLUDING HIS BRINGING YOU HERE TONIGHT.



YOU DON'T THINK MUCH OF ME, DO YOU?

QUITE THE CONTRARY. I THINK THE WORLD OF YOU.

AND WHILE HE MAY NOT *SAY* IT...

...SO DOES HE.



YOU BEGAN THIS EVENING ASKING WHAT YOU COULD DO TO HELP.

YOU ARE DOING IT, MISS KYLE. AND PLEASE CONTINUE TO DO SO.



MRRROW...



THE GRAVE





The Cave.
Underneath Wayne Manor.

CAN YOU
AT LEAST TELL
ME WHAT YOU'RE
LOOKING FOR?

I have invited Catwoman...
Selina...down here.

To include her
in this investigation.



ANSWERS.

YOU THINK
YOU COULD BE
A LITTLE MORE
VAGUE?

To include her in... my life.



WHAT IF EVERYTHING
THAT'S HAPPENED IN
THE PAST FEW
MONTHS --

-- POISON IVY'S
TAKING CONTROL
OF YOU --

-- KILLER
CROC'S
SUBSEQUENT
ATTACK --

--THE FIGHTS
WITH SUPERMAN,
HARLEY QUINN,
THE JOKER --

--TOMMY
ELLIOT'S
DEATH --

-- ALL HAD BEEN
ORCHESTRATED?

CURIOUS.
WHO'S DOING IT
AND WHY?



SINCE THIS
ALL STARTED,
WHAT IS
DIFFERENT?

...

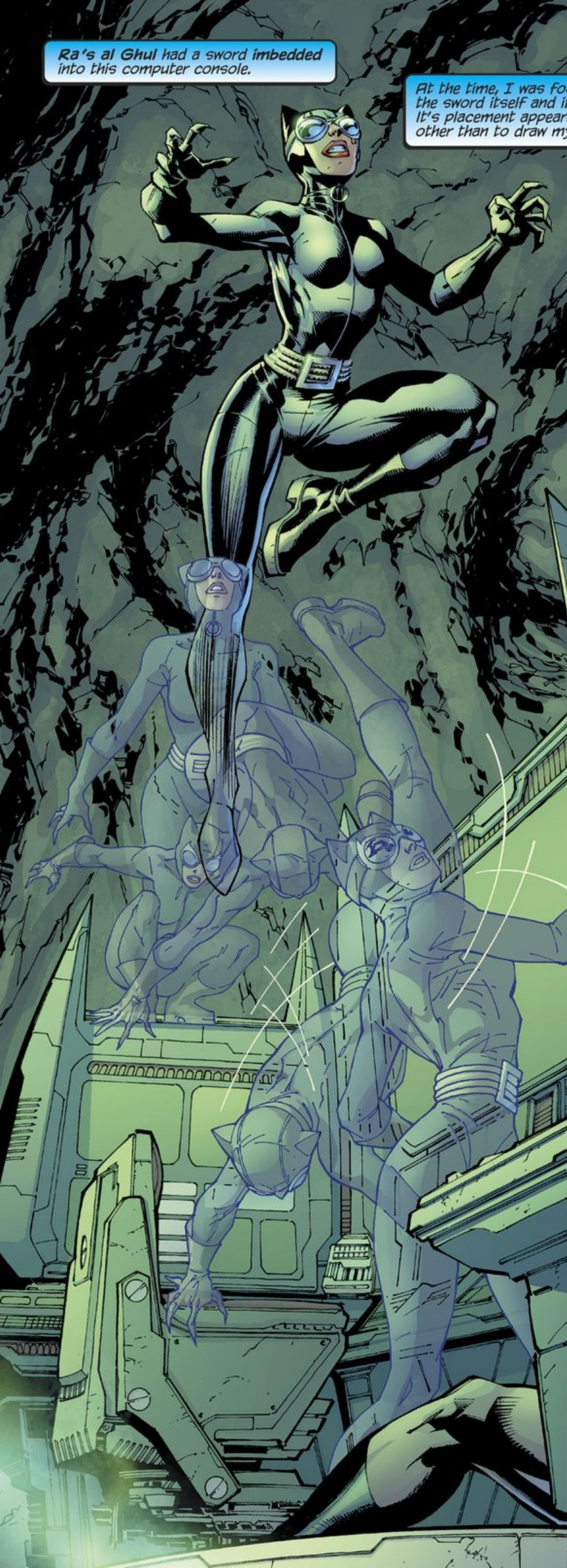
US.

AND DO YOU
THINK THAT'S A
RESULT OF --

HOLD THAT
THOUGHT.

Ra's al Ghul had a sword imbedded into this computer console.

At the time, I was focused on the sword itself and its meaning. It's placement appeared random other than to draw my attention.



WHY DON'T YOU COME OUT AND JOIN THE PARTY...?



In doing so, I may have neglected the first rule as a detective...



...ROBIN.

...nothing is random.



MAYBE BECAUSE I WASN'T ASKED.

BUT I'LL BE HAPPY TO CRASH IT.

Admittedly, Catwoman has been a... distraction.

Is that what my opponent intended?

Tim Drake came into my life uninvited.

Dick Grayson had left,
outgrowing his role as Robin
and choosing to become
Nightwing.

PTOOSH

YOU
SHOULDN'T
BE HERE.

And after
Jason Todd died...

YOU
SHOULDN'T BE
TELLING OTHER
PEOPLE WHAT
TO DO.

YOU
MIGHT'VE
FOOLED
HIM.

SEDUCED
HIM.

BUT,
I KNOW WHAT
YOU ARE --

KID.

TKUSH

YOU
DON'T KNOW
THE *FIRST*
THING ABOUT
ME.

SO, LET ME
SCHOOL YOU ON
SOMETHING --

WHP

--I DON'T LET *GROWN*
MEN SPEAK TO ME
THE WAY YOU
JUST DID --

After Jason died, I swore there would
never be another Robin, and yet...

-- BUT THOSE
WHO *HAVE* ONLY
DID IT *ONCE*.

Chapter Ten
THE GRAVE

ENOUGH.

Tim Drake is Robin,
The Teen Wonder.





CALM
DOWN.
DON'T
TELL ME
TO--

--THIS ISN'T A
DISCUSSION.

Tim was something of
an amateur detective.
He had studied Batman.
A boy with a hobby.

Jason had died. I was alone. Angry.
Tim recognized that anger and
decided to do something about it.



ROBIN.
SHE'S MY
GUEST.

He managed to accomplish what
few others have been able to do.

He deduced that Batman
and Bruce Wayne were
one and the same.

Furthermore, that
Dick Grayson had
been the original Robin.

SHE
CAN'T BE
TRUSTED.



THAT'S MY
CHOICE.



LIKE
THIS--

--WAS MY
CHOICE.



YOU TOLD
HER...?



Tim clung to a theory that Batman needs a Robin.

YOU GOT IT STRAIGHT NOW?

OR DO I HAVE TO DRAW YOU A PICTURE?



More than just for a legacy, but as a balance.

YOU SHOULD'VE--
I SHOULD HAVE WHAT?

CONSULTED YOU?
THIS WAS MY DECISION.



THEN, YOU MADE THE **WRONG** ONE.

IT WAS **MINE** TO MAKE.



I had taken both Dick and Jason in when they had no place else to go.

But Tim sought out the role. He **wanted** to be Robin.

And as hard as I tried to convince him otherwise, Tim worked for it.





IT'S GETTING A LITTLE THICK IN HERE.

YOU SHOULD TRY AIRING THIS PLACE OUT EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE.

I'M BORROWING ONE OF YOUR MOTORCYCLES.

YOU CAN TAKE THE---



I WASN'T ASKING.



WHEN YOU'RE ALL THROUGH WITH YOUR TOY WONDER, YOU KNOW HOW TO FIND ME.

THROOM

SKRREEE



DO YOU THINK SHE BOUGHT IT?

THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO FIND OUT.



Dick saw being Robin as a thrill. It's probably why he outgrew it.

Jason saw being Robin as a game. It's probably what got him killed.

I COULD'VE TAKEN HER, Y'KNOW.

TELL HER THAT.



But... Tim...

...I have to hand it to the boy...

He wants to be the world's greatest detective. And from what I've seen so far...

...he will be someday.

I had told Tim about my decision to include Selina in my life...

...if for no other reason than I knew Dick would tell him and Tim should hear it from me.

WROOOM

He was angry. Confused. And I had to remember how young he is and how long ago it was since I was his age.

If Tim has one character flaw, it's that he still sees the world in blacks and whites. Good and evil wear very different masks in his eyes.

SKREEECH

HEY!

HUNTRESS...?

He's getting old enough to accept that there are "grays" in every situation. We may not like them, but it's part of what we do.

And my relationship with Catwoman is, at best, gray.

So... when Tim asked the obvious question, "Do you trust her?"--

LADY, YOU PICKED THE **WRONG** NIGHT TO PLAY GAMES WITH ME...

--I gave him the obvious answer.

"I wouldn't have told her I was Bruce Wayne unless I did."

SKRREEEEKK



Three nights later, I came back to Tim and said I trusted him.

Whoever it is that is interfering in my life--

--who killed Tommy Elliot--

--is someone close. Someone who knows me. Has studied me.



And if my experience when I first met Tim still holds true--

--then it is possible this individual -- if it is one person -- has uncovered...

... Bruce Wayne is Batman.

WE DIDN'T KNOW.



"WE...?"

WHEN WE TOOK THE MONEY. FOR THE BIKE. THE EQUIPMENT. THE NEW UNIFORM.

WE CHECKED THE GUY OUT. HE WAS CLEAN. THE MONEY WAS CLEAN OR WE WOULDN'T HAVE TAKEN IT.

BUT... WHEN THEY KILLED HIM, I KNEW IT WAS ALL GOING TO UNRAVEL.

HUNTRESS. I DON'T HAVE THE SLIGHTEST IDEA WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT.



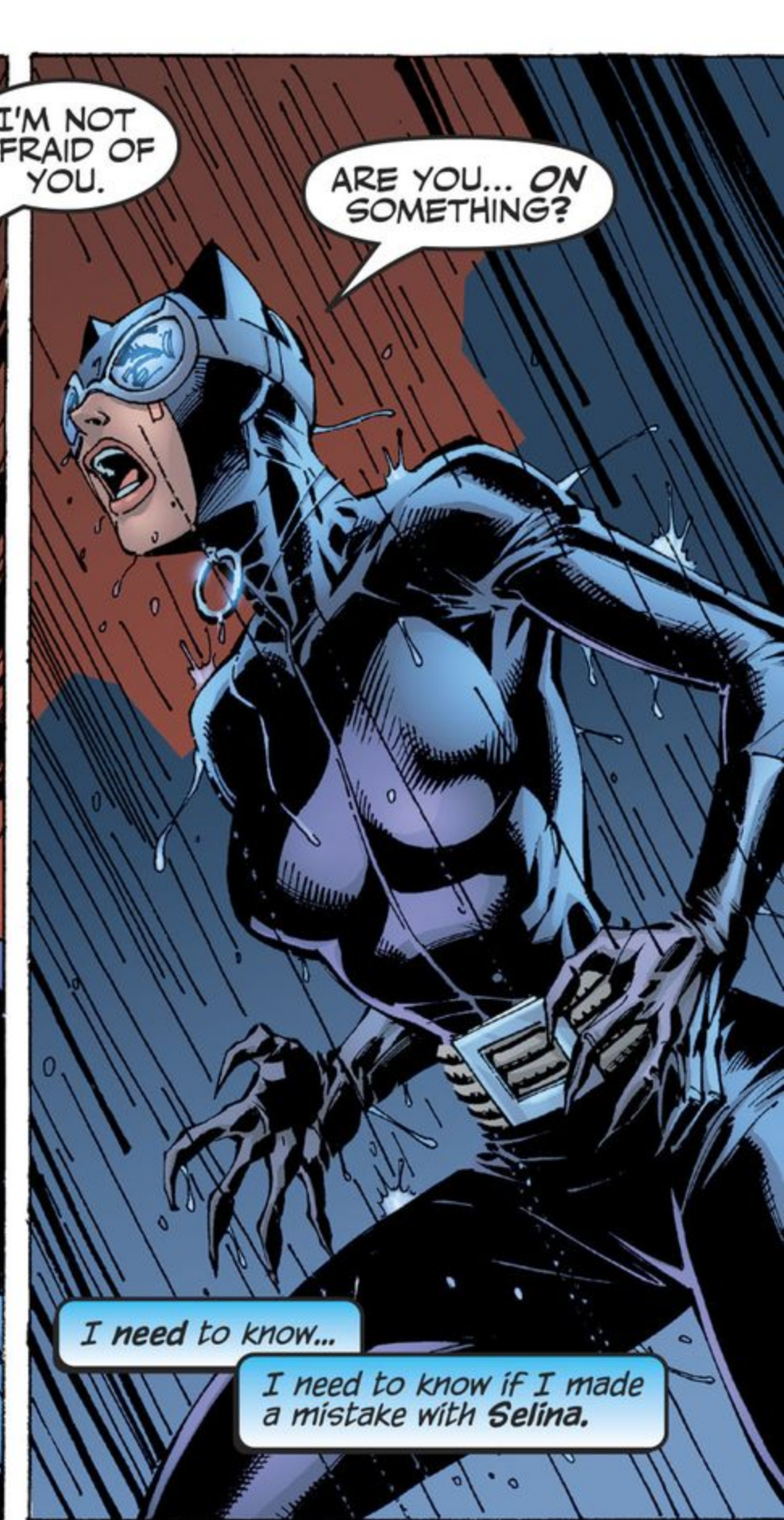
I SAVED HIS LIFE,

NOT THAT HE'D EVER THANK ME, BUT IF I HADN'T PUT HIM IN THE CAR...



I KNEW HE'D FIGURE OUT MY BEING NEAR CRIME ALLEY WAS TOO COINCIDENTAL.

THAT I'D BE THE FIRST ONE THERE.



I'M NOT AFRAID OF YOU.

ARE YOU... ON SOMETHING?

I need to know...

I need to know if I made a mistake with Selina.

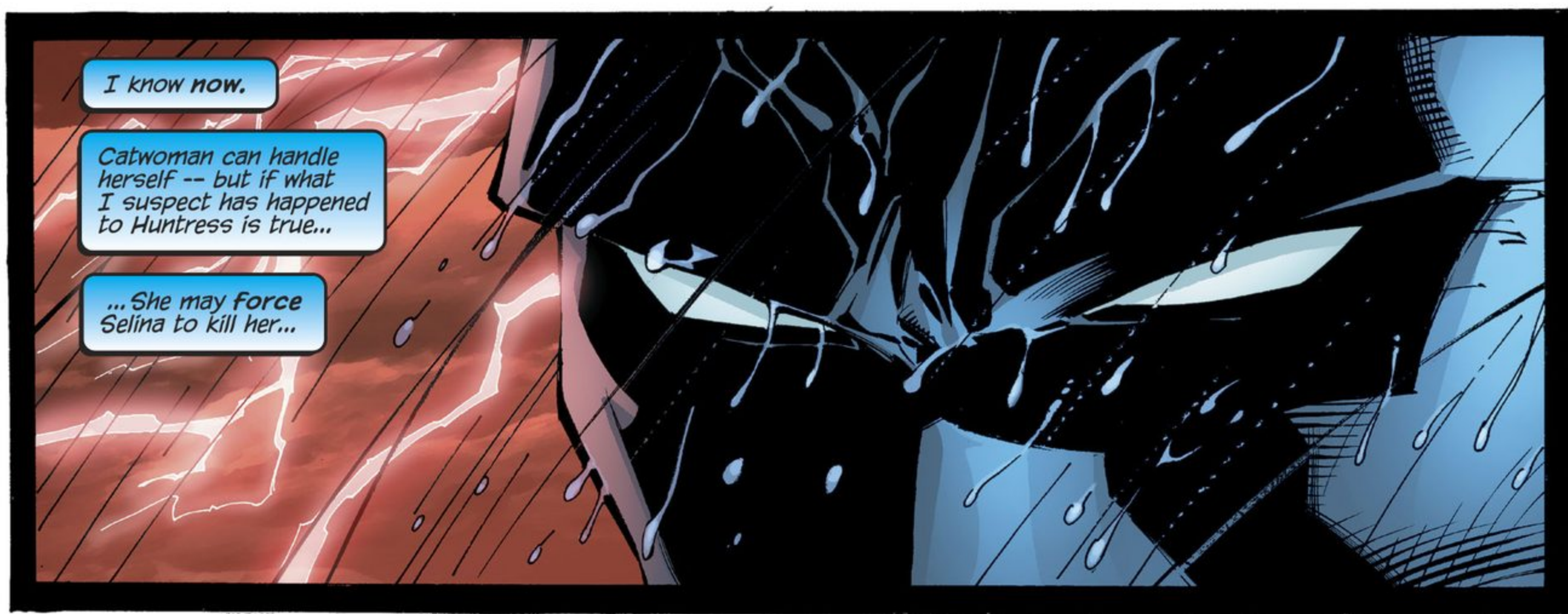


IT'S GOING
TO GET WORSE
BEFORE IT GETS
BETTER!

SLAM

HUNTRESS!

As Alfred would undoubtedly say,
"The seeds of doubt grow bitter fruit."







Huntress' movements.
Her speech pattern.
Her obvious fear of
something that is
haunting her.

TALK
TO ME,
DAMMIT!

Only one person could have
affected her mind in that way.

Jonathan Crane is
The Scarecrow.
Psychiatrist turned
Psychopath.

HUSH,
LITTLE BABY,
DON'T SAY
A WORD...

VR
OOOM

His involvement in tonight...
in all of this... reveals a great deal.



...MAMA'S GOING
TO BUY YOU A
MOCKINGBIRD.



AND IF THAT
MOCKINGBIRD
DON'T SING...

Crane has developed
various fear toxins
that invade the mind.

Depending on the severity
of the dose, there can be
no immediate antidote--

--other then
time and sleep.



...MAMA'S
GOING TO BUY
YOU A DIAMOND
RING.

Scarecrow's control
hangs on keeping his
opponent off balance.

Rearranging reality.

But...it wasn't until now that
I could be sure that all of
this night was arranged...



WHARROO



...to bring me here.

BAM



AND IF THAT DIAMOND RING TURNS BRASS, MAMA'S GOING TO BUY YOU A LOOKING GLASS.

PLK



GAH!

PHOOSH

AND IF THAT LOOKING GLASS GETS BROKE, MAMA'S GOING TO BUY YOU A BILLY GOAT.



~KOFF~
~KAFF~
~KOFF~

This graveyard.

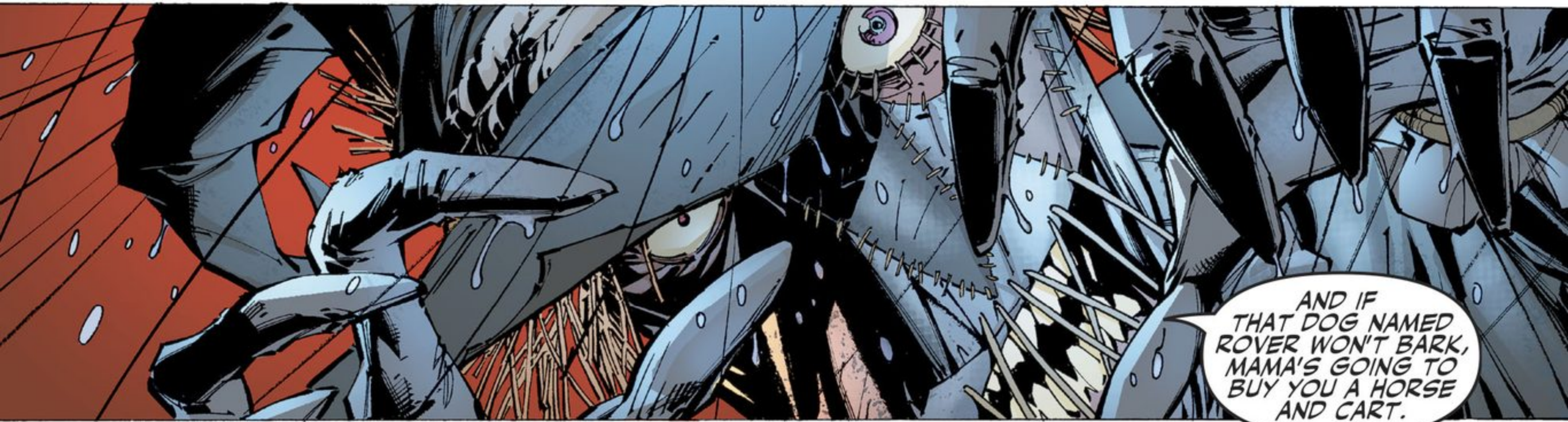
No one should know...

...who is buried here.

AND IF THAT BILLY GOAT WON'T PULL, MAMA'S GOING TO BUY YOU A CART AND BULL.



AND IF
THAT CART AND
BULL TURN OVER,
MAMA'S GOING TO
BUY YOU A DOG
NAMED ROVER.



AND IF
THAT DOG NAMED
ROVER WON'T BARK,
MAMA'S GOING TO
BUY YOU A HORSE
AND CART.



AND IF
THAT HORSE AND
CART FALL--
URK.

WHY?



TELL
ME.



MAMA'S GONNA
BUY...

STOP IT.
IT'S OVER.

I DON'T
WANT TO TALK TO
SCARECROW...

...I WANT
DOCTOR
JONATHAN
CRANE.



YOU DID
THE **PROFILE**
WORK.

USED YOUR
EXPERTISE AS A
PSYCHIATRIST TO
EXPLOIT WHAT
THEY ALL
WANTED.

THE JOKER.
HARLEY QUINN.
POISON IVY.
KILLER CROC.

HUNTRESS.

CATWOMAN.

ME.



I...I DON'T
UNDERSTAND.
MY FEAR GAS
SHOULD HAVE
AFFECTED
YOU.

UNLESS...

...YOUR MIND
WAS ALREADY
INFECTED BY
ANOTHER--



VZRP

NNGGNNN



WHO...



FAP



The voice... muffled by the bandages... hidden in the wind...

YOU CARE ABOUT THIS... IMPOSTOR...

...PRETENDER...



LET THE BOY GO.

WHY? WHY SHOULD I GIVE HIM THE CHANCE YOU NEVER GAVE ME?

WHO ARE YOU?



THE WORLD'S GREATEST DETECTIVE AND YOU *STILL* HAVEN'T FIGURED IT OUT?

SHLKK



This place is... was a secret. We... *Alfred* and I had the body moved here so no one could find it.

Defile it.

LIFE'S JUST A *GAME*, BATMAN...

...AND
THIS TIME,
YOU
LOSE.

Jason Todd became Robin
after Dick Grayson.

Hoping to harness the
rage that had driven him
throughout his life,
I taught him how to fight.

He knows all
my secrets.

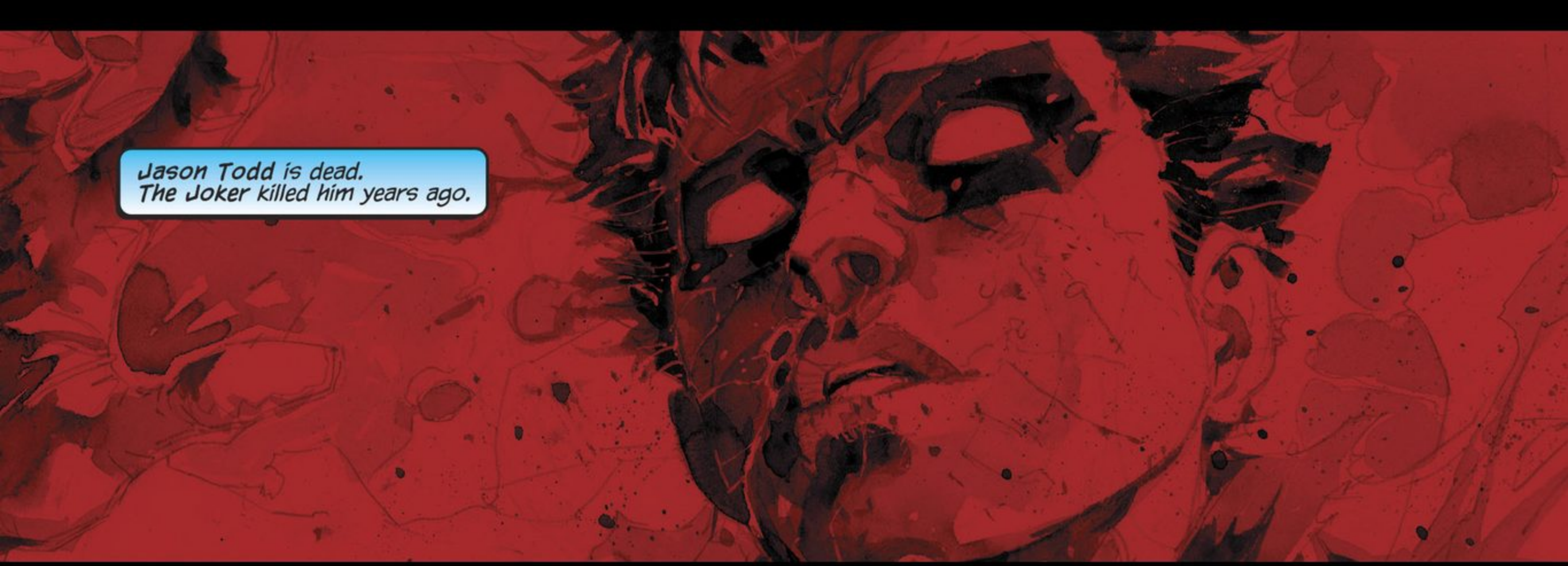
...and he has been
dead for years...







T H E G A M E



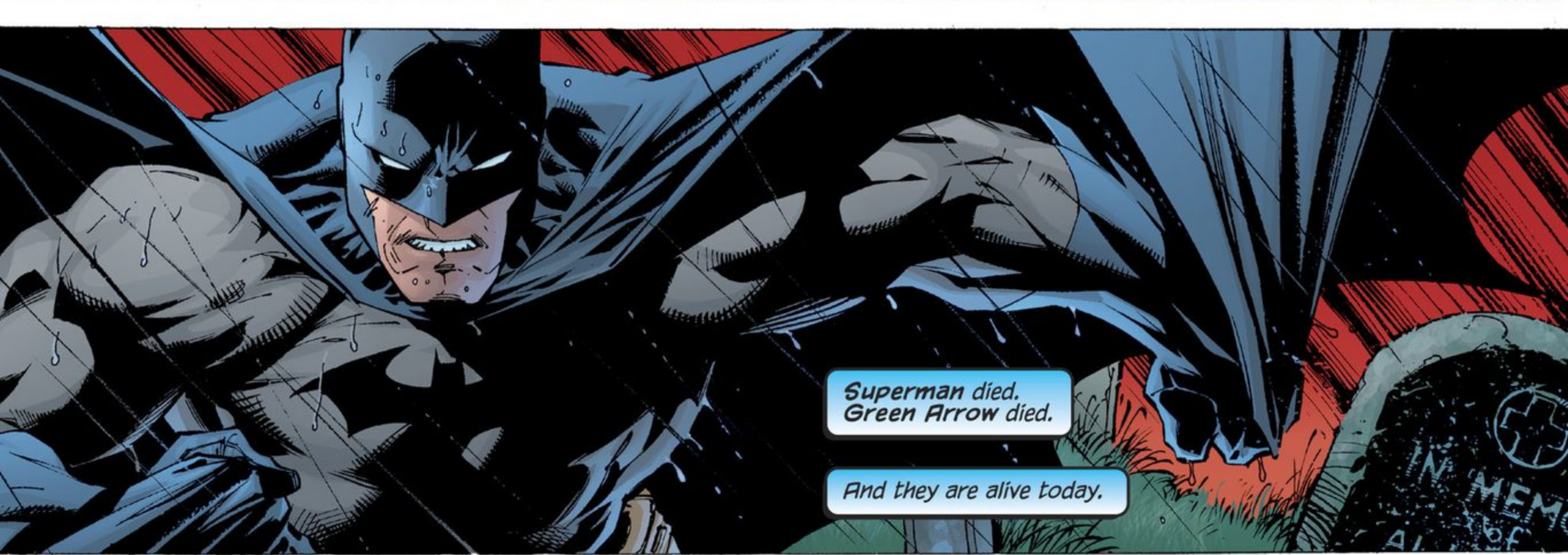
Jason Todd is dead.
The Joker killed him years ago.



However, it is not impossible
for the dead to come back to life.

I KNOW
WHAT YOU'RE
DOING.
YOU'RE
THINKING ABOUT
WHEN I DIED.

HOW
THERE'S **BLOOD**
ON YOUR HANDS
BECAUSE YOU
COULDN'T GET
THERE IN TIME TO
STOP **THE JOKER**
FROM KILLING
ME.



Superman died.
Green Arrow died.

And they are alive today.



Jason was buried here.
The grave is empty.
His corpse is **gone**.

KEEPING SILENT.
GATHERING YOUR
THOUGHTS. HOPING
TO RATTLE YOUR
OPPONENT.

I'LL
MAKE IT
SIMPLE FOR
YOU.

YOU'VE
GOT TO GET
TO ME --

--BEFORE
I SLIT THIS
PRETENDER'S
THROAT.

TELL ME,
BATMAN.
YOU LET **ONE**
ROBIN DIE.

WANT
TO GO FOR
TWO?



TAKE HIM.

NO!

Ra's al Ghul has something he calls a "Lazarus Pit."

The pit has certain... properties... that can restore life to the dead.



According to Ra's--who could be lying--someone took advantage of one of the pits' healing energies.

KRUSH

CATWOMAN.
I TOLD YOU
TO STAY WITH
THE HUNTRESS.



COULDN'T
LET SOMEONE ELSE
CLIP THE LITTLE
BIRD'S WINGS.

I DIDN'T
KNOW YOU
CARED.

I DON'T.
BUT IF SOMETHING
HAPPENED TO YOU,
HE'D BE HELL
TO LIVE WITH...



As with most things,
using the Lazarus Pit
comes at a price.

Upon emergence from the pit,
madness fuels the survivor.

BAM

You enter dead.
You come out insane.



The terrible irony is that when Jason died...

DID YOU THINK YOU COULD TAKE ME WITH ONE PUNCH?



...in the madness of grief...

THIS WAS ALWAYS OUR PROBLEM.



...I actually considered...

YOU SAW ME AS SECOND-RATE.



...putting Jason in a Lazarus Pit myself.

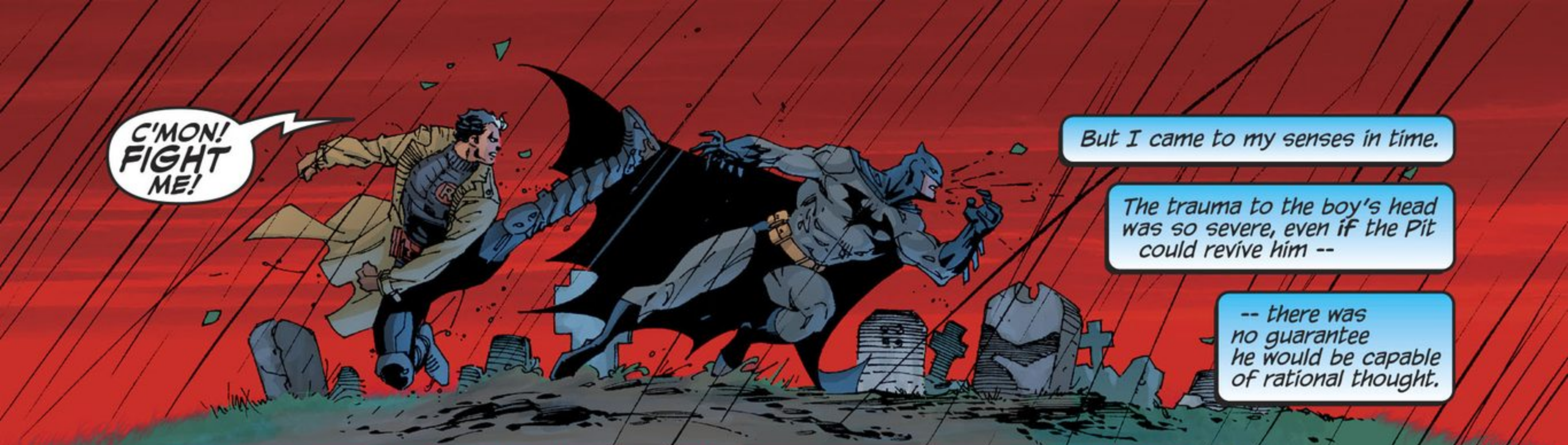
NOT BEING ABLE TO BE AS GOOD AS THE "OTHER" ROBIN!

A full-page comic book illustration. In the center, a man with white hair and a brown trench coat is screaming with his mouth wide open. He has a red 'S' on his chest. He is looking down at a figure lying on the ground. The figure is wearing a dark, hooded cloak and has a pained expression on their face. The background is dark and rainy, with a red sky and bare trees. There are two speech bubbles: one from the man in the trench coat and one from the figure on the ground. The overall tone is dramatic and intense.

Chapter Eleven
THE GAME

HOW COULD
YOU LET ME
DIE?

*I would have done anything
to save Jason's life.*

A wide panel showing Batman and Two-Face in a graveyard. Two-Face is on the left, wearing a tan trench coat and a mask with a white-to-black split. He is shouting and gesturing towards Batman. Batman is on the right, in his blue and grey suit with a black cape, looking back at Two-Face. The background is a graveyard with tombstones and a red, cloudy sky.

**C'MON!
FIGHT
ME!**

But I came to my senses in time.

The trauma to the boy's head
was so severe, even if the Pit
could revive him --

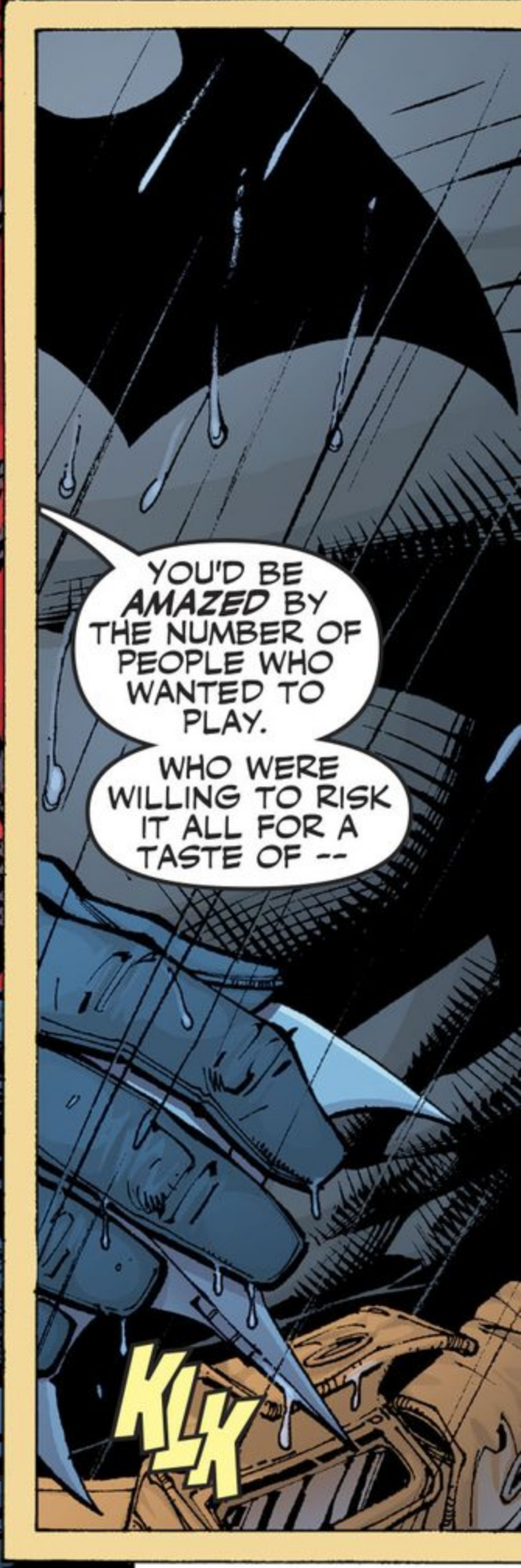
-- there was
no guarantee
he would be capable
of rational thought.

A medium panel focusing on Two-Face standing and taunting Batman. Two-Face is on the left, looking down at Batman with a smug expression. Batman is on the right, crouching on the ground, looking up at Two-Face with a determined and slightly pained expression. His face has some blood on it. The background shows bare trees and a red sky.

**YOU OWE
ME THAT.**

**SHOW ME
SOME
RESPECT--**

**-- SO
I CAN WIN
THIS GAME,
BATMAN.**

A close-up panel of Two-Face's face. He is looking down, and his expression is one of intense focus or perhaps a grimace. Rain or sweat is dripping from his face. The background is dark and blurry.

**YOU'D BE
AMAZED BY
THE NUMBER OF
PEOPLE WHO
WANTED TO
PLAY.**

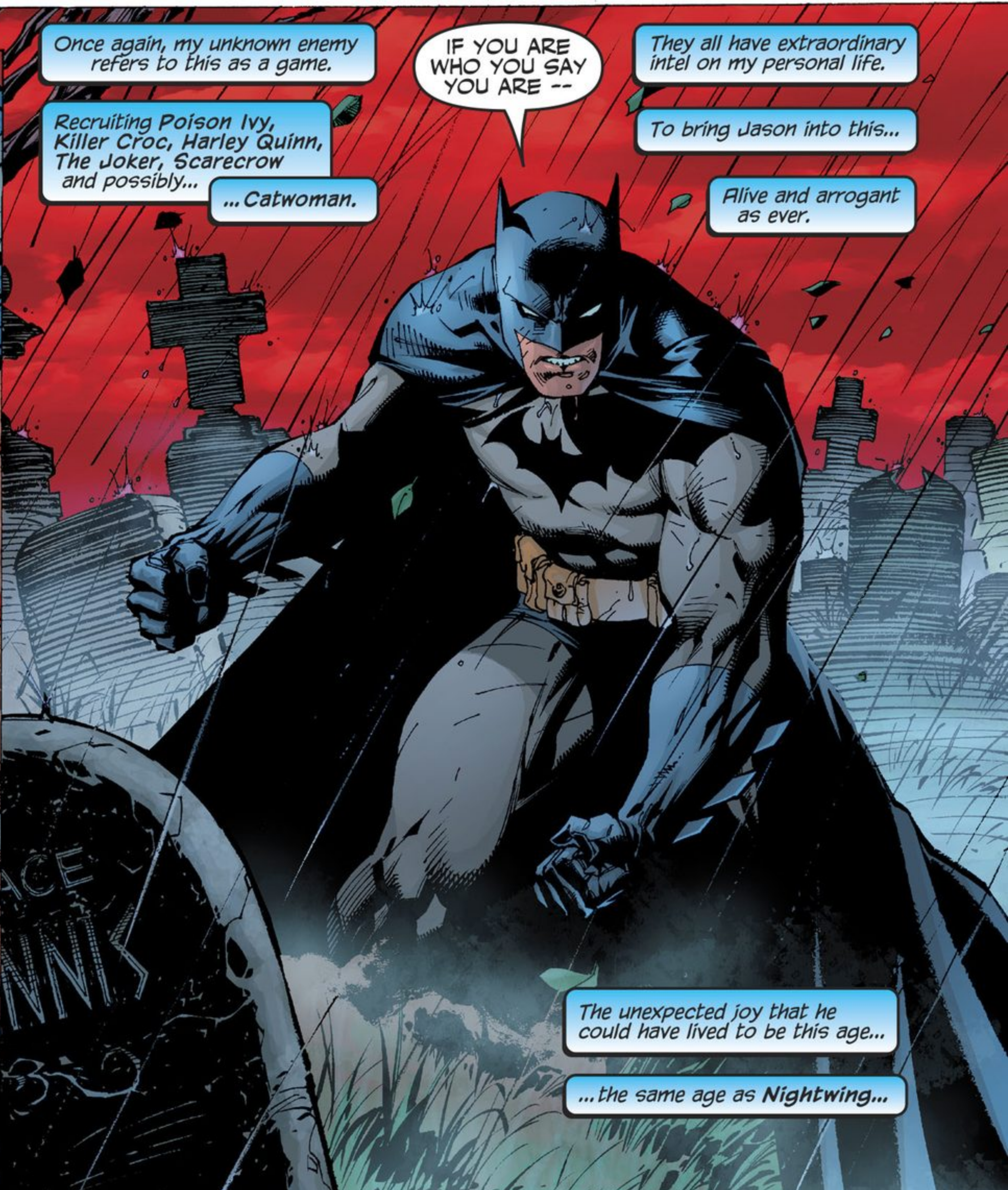
**WHO WERE
WILLING TO RISK
IT ALL FOR A
TASTE OF --**

KLK

A wide panel showing Two-Face attacking Batman. Two-Face is on top of Batman, using his weight and hands to restrain him. Batman is on the bottom, looking up at Two-Face with a determined expression. The background is a red, cloudy sky.

CHUK

**--REVENGE--
AARGH!**



Once again, my unknown enemy refers to this as a game.

Recruiting Poison Ivy, Killer Croc, Harley Quinn, The Joker, Scarecrow and possibly...

... Catwoman.

IF YOU ARE WHO YOU SAY YOU ARE --

They all have extraordinary intel on my personal life.

To bring Jason into this...

Alive and arrogant as ever.

The unexpected joy that he could have lived to be this age...

...the same age as Nightwing...





His coordination. His speed.
The acrobatics.



It's all... too familiar.



YOU HAVE TO
LET HIM DO THIS
ALONE.

TAKE
YOUR
HAND
OFF OF
ME.

I DON'T "HAVE"
TO DO ANYTHING.
PARTICULARLY WHEN
IT COMES FROM
YOU.

JUST
LISTEN
TO ME --
PLEASE.

THE ENTIRE
TIME I'VE BEEN
ROBIN --

-- EVERY LESSON
-- EVERY MOVE THAT
BATMAN HAS TAUGHT
ME --

-- IS
INTENDED
TO KEEP WHAT
HAPPENED TO
JASON FROM
HAPPENING
TO ME.



NO MATTER
WHAT HE SAYS,
JASON'S DEATH
STILL HAUNTS
HIM.

WHY ELSE
WOULD HE KEEP
JASON'S COSTUME
SO PROMINENTLY
IN THE CAVE?

THEN YOU
SHOULD KNOW
BETTER THAN
ANYONE, KID --

-- WHAT HE'S
LIKE WHEN HE'S
ANGRY.

ASK YOURSELF,
BOY WONDER --

-- WHAT'S
HE GOING TO DO
IF HE FINDS OUT THAT
IT'S NOT JASON TODD
COME BACK TO
HAUNT HIM?



Bottom line...
Jason was never
this good.



I HAVE
TO ADMIT,
I'M A LITTLE
DISAPPOINTED.

I MEAN,
I KNOW YOU
WERE DISTRACTED
BY GETTING
A LITTLE ACTION
WITH CATWOMAN.

THEN,
THE DEATH OF
TOMMY ELLIOT
REALLY PUSHED
YOUR BUTTONS.

THAK

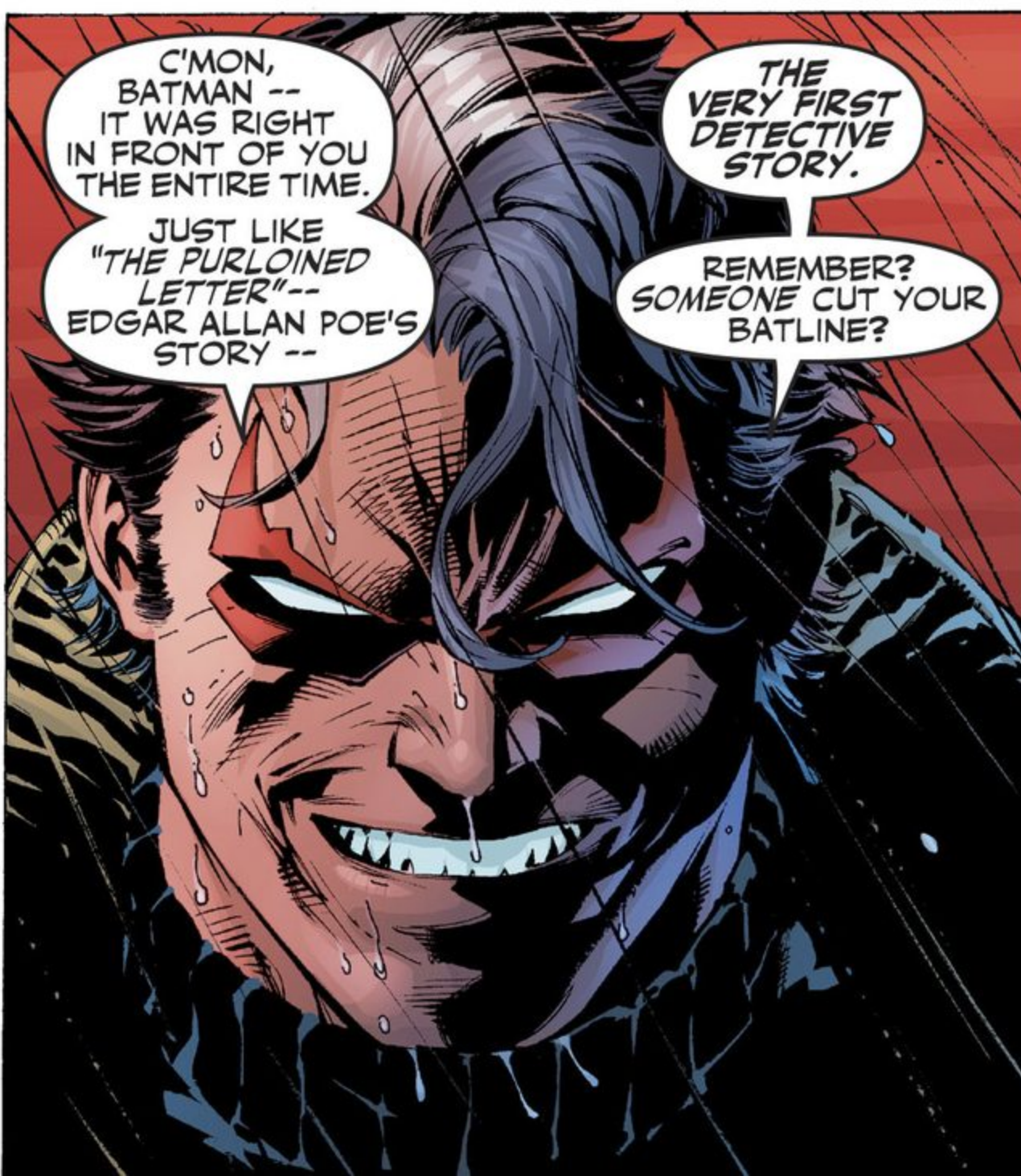


CHOK

CHOK



GOING AFTER
THE JOKER--
RA'S AL GHUL--
--EVERYBODY
BUT THE RIGHT
SOMEBODY.



C'MON,
BATMAN --
IT WAS RIGHT
IN FRONT OF YOU
THE ENTIRE TIME.

JUST LIKE
"THE PURLOINED
LETTER"--
EDGAR ALLAN POE'S
STORY --

THE
VERY FIRST
DETECTIVE
STORY.

REMEMBER?
SOMEONE CUT YOUR
BATLINE?



"The Purloined Letter"--
when the answer
is in plain sight.



It was a batarang.

I cannot always collect them
at a crime scene.



It was by design that
I landed in Crime Alley.



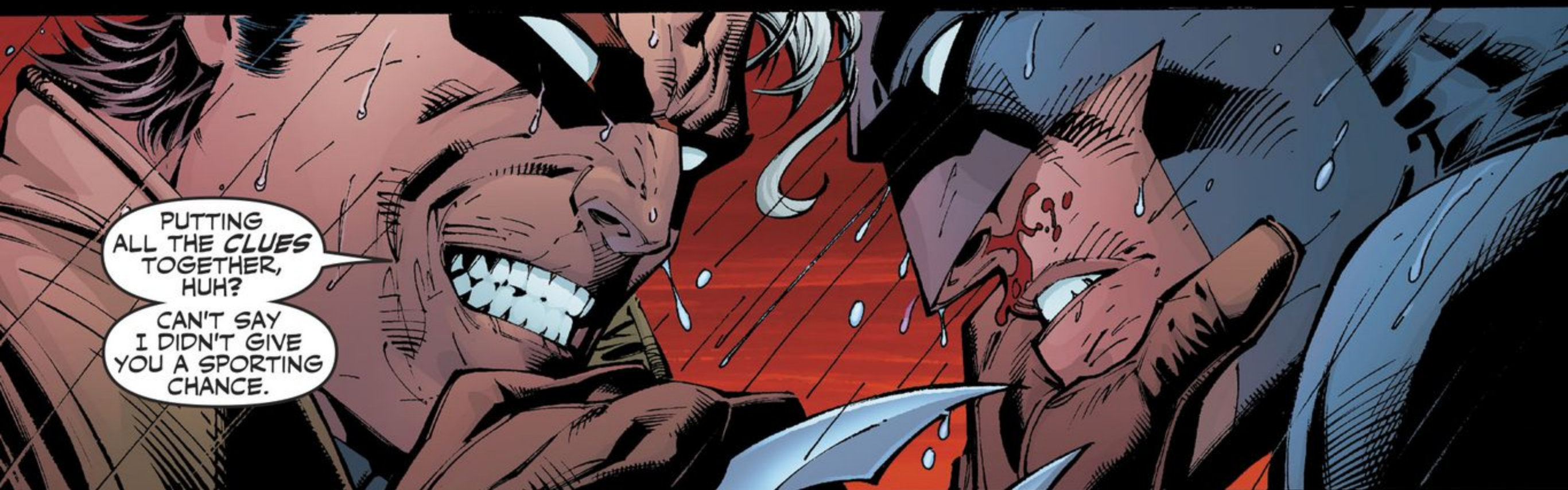
Where we first met.

Where Jason was stealing...



... the left front tire of the Batmobile.

The same one that blew out
chasing Killer Croc.



PUTTING
ALL THE **CLUES**
TOGETHER,
HUH?

CAN'T SAY
I DIDN'T GIVE
YOU A SPORTING
CHANCE.



YOU
MAY HAVE
A LOT OF
FACTS.

PERSONAL
HISTORY.
ANECDOTES.

YOU MAY
EVEN HAVE SET UP
ALL THOSE INCIDENTS
TO ECHO WHAT
HAPPENED IN THE
PAST.

BUT...



YOU ARE NOT
THE ROBIN WHO
DIED.

To make it perfect...
for me to truly believe
that this was Jason...

...he would have called me "Bruce."

Whoever orchestrated this --
and I believe that person knows --
withheld my secret identity.





EVEN
IN THE END...
JASON KNEW HOW
MUCH I LOVED
HIM.



I could never forget you...

It is even possible that **this impostor** did not know that **Jason Todd** was **Robin**.

He could have been told to put on a costume and come to this open grave. Given what to say...up to a point.

He never referred to himself as "Jason"... and I never called him that either.



CLAY.

WHEN
DID YOU
KNOW?



THAT IT
WASN'T
JASON?

I DIDN'T AT FIRST.
THE CLUES LED ME
TO BELIEVE THAT
A LAZARUS PIT HAD BEEN
USED AND JASON *COULD*
HAVE BEEN BROUGHT
BACK TO LIFE.

BUT,
ON THE GROUND...
IN THE MUD.

CLAY.



IT WAS
CLAYFACE
MIMICKING
THE ROLE.

BUT... WHY MAKE
JASON *OLDER*?
A CORPSE DOESN'T
AGE.



TO HIDE THE FLAWS.
THEY COULDN'T BE SURE
EXACTLY HOW JASON'S VOICE
SOUNDED OR HOW HE MOVED
AND FOUGHT --

-- HE'D BEEN
DEAD TOO LONG --

-- BUT
CLAYFACE COULD
MIMIC *NIGHTWING*.
THAT'S WHY HIS
ACROBATICS SEEMED
SO FAMILIAR.

AND
COPYING
ME --?

-- WOULD
HAVE BEEN
JUST THAT. IF
THE ILLUSION WAS
GOING TO WORK,
I HAD TO BE
UNSURE.



YOUR
MOVEMENTS
ARE TOO
RECENT --
TOO VIBRANT
IN MY MIND.

I AM KIND
OF UNIQUE,
AREN'T I?

YOUR
NECK...?



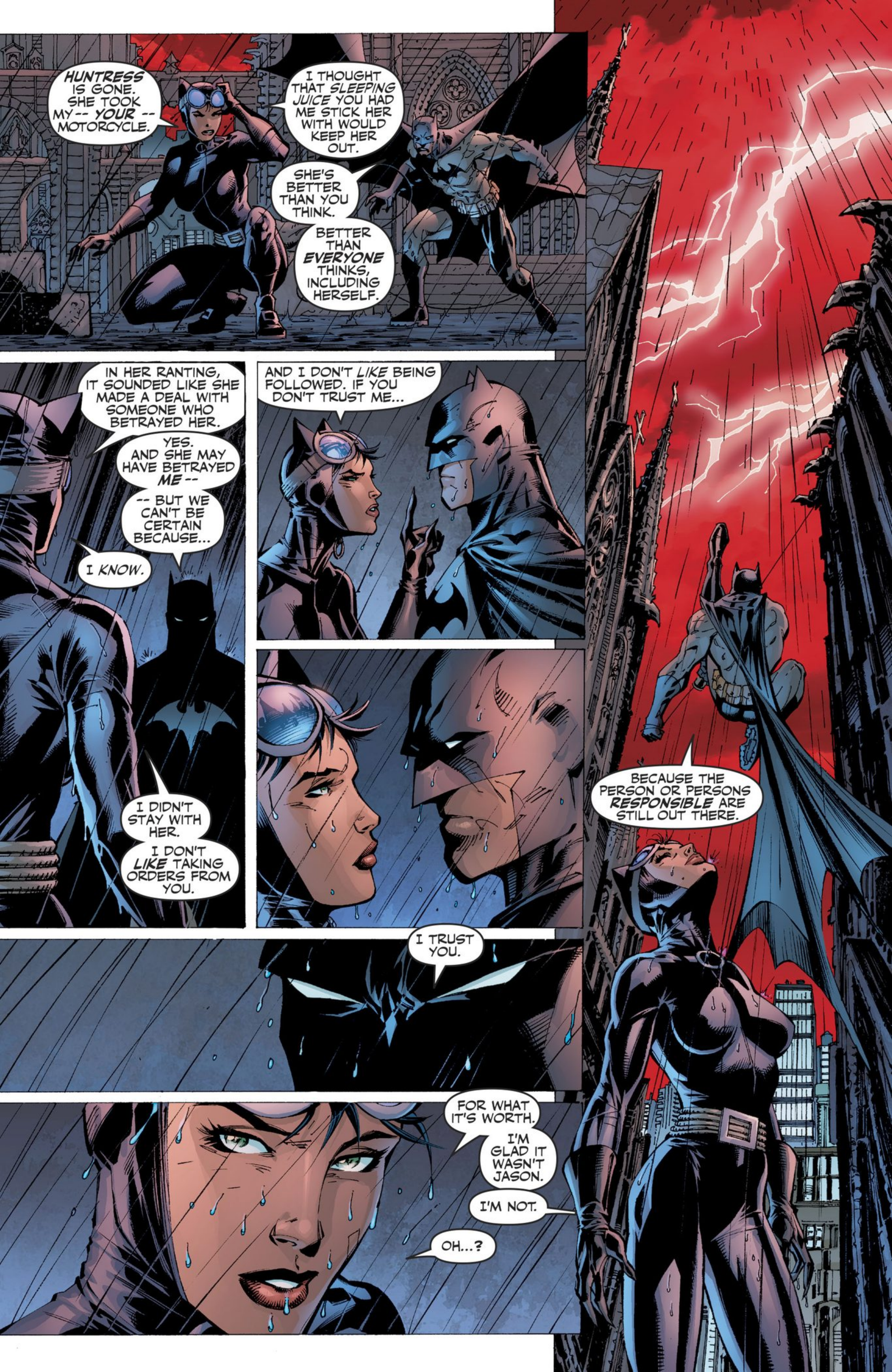
I'LL NEED
STITCHES.
BUT CATWOMAN
GOT THE BLEEDING
STOPPED.

SHE PROBABLY
SAVED MY LIFE,
YOU KNOW.

GO TO THE CAVE.
HAVE *ALFRED* TEND
TO YOUR WOUND.

THEN GET TO
WORK ON THAT
COSTUME.

SEE IF THERE'S
ANYTHING ON IT OTHER
THAN CLAY THAT WILL HELP
US FIND OUT WHO IS
BEHIND ALL THIS.



HUNTRESS
IS GONE.
SHE TOOK
MY-- YOUR --
MOTORCYCLE.

I THOUGHT
THAT *SLEEPING*
JUICE YOU HAD
ME STICK HER
WITH WOULD
KEEP HER
OUT.

SHE'S
BETTER
THAN YOU
THINK.

BETTER
THAN
EVERYONE
THINKS,
INCLUDING
HERSELF.

IN HER RANTING,
IT SOUNDED LIKE SHE
MADE A DEAL WITH
SOMEONE WHO
BETRAYED HER.

YES.
AND SHE MAY
HAVE BETRAYED
ME--

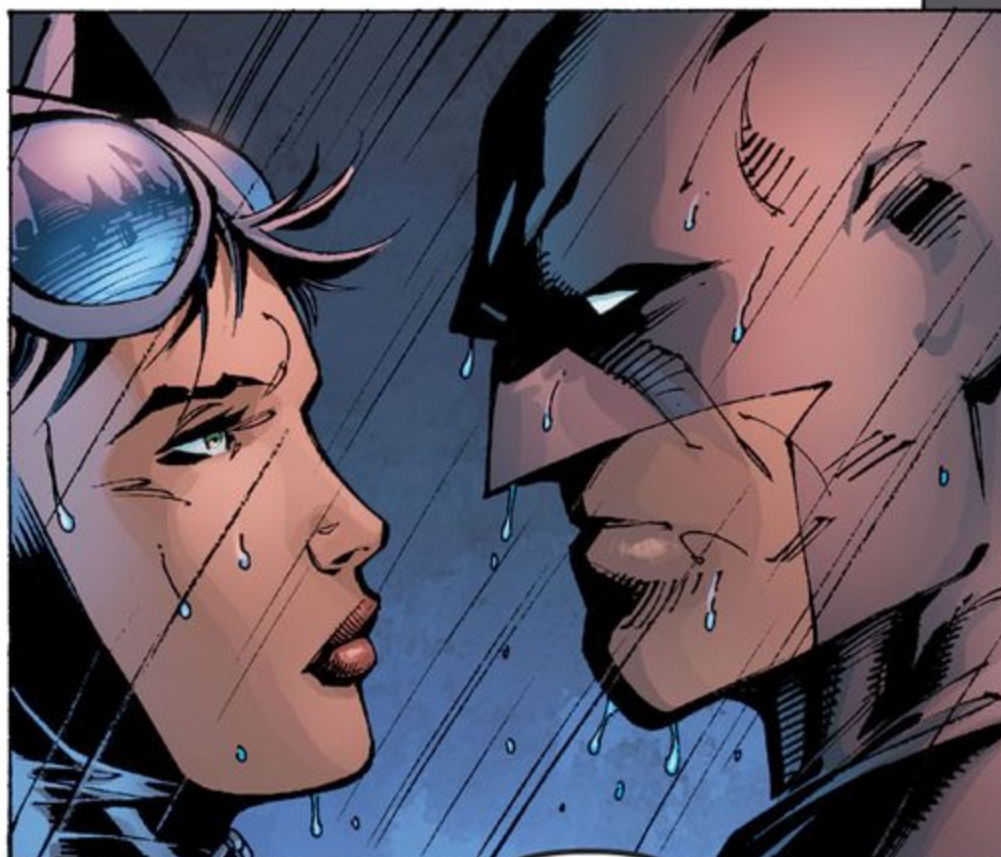
-- BUT WE
CAN'T BE
CERTAIN
BECAUSE...

I KNOW.

I DIDN'T
STAY WITH
HER.

I DON'T
LIKE TAKING
ORDERS FROM
YOU.

AND I DON'T *LIKE* BEING
FOLLOWED. IF YOU
DON'T TRUST ME...



I TRUST
YOU.

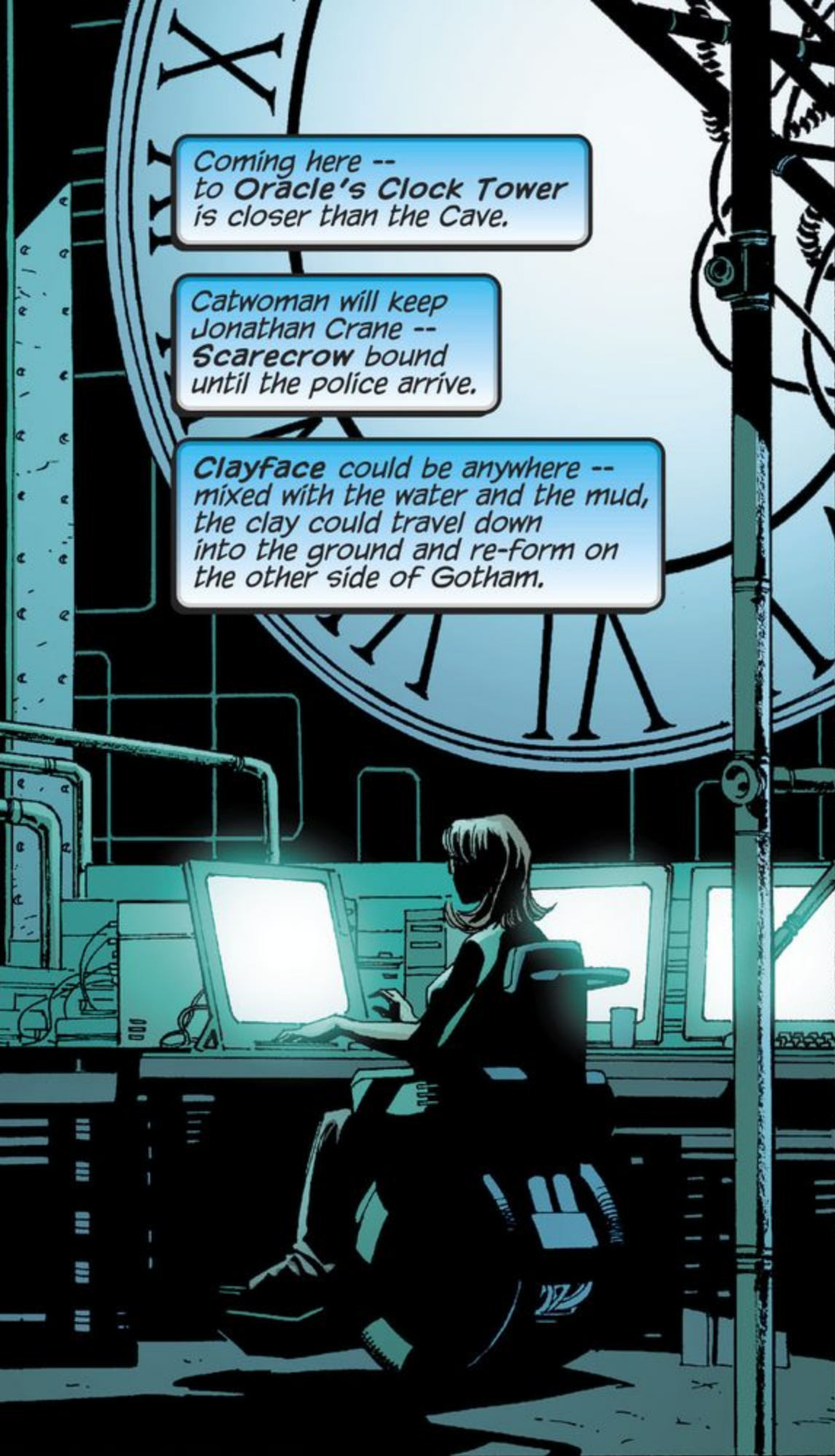
FOR WHAT
IT'S WORTH.

I'M
GLAD IT
WASN'T
JASON.

I'M NOT.

OH...?

BECAUSE THE
PERSON OR PERSONS
RESPONSIBLE ARE
STILL OUT THERE.



Coming here --
to Oracle's Clock Tower
is closer than the Cave.

Catwoman will keep
Jonathan Crane --
Scarecrow bound
until the police arrive.

Clayface could be anywhere --
mixed with the water and the mud,
the clay could travel down
into the ground and re-form on
the other side of Gotham.



I NEED
TO FIND
HUNTRESS.

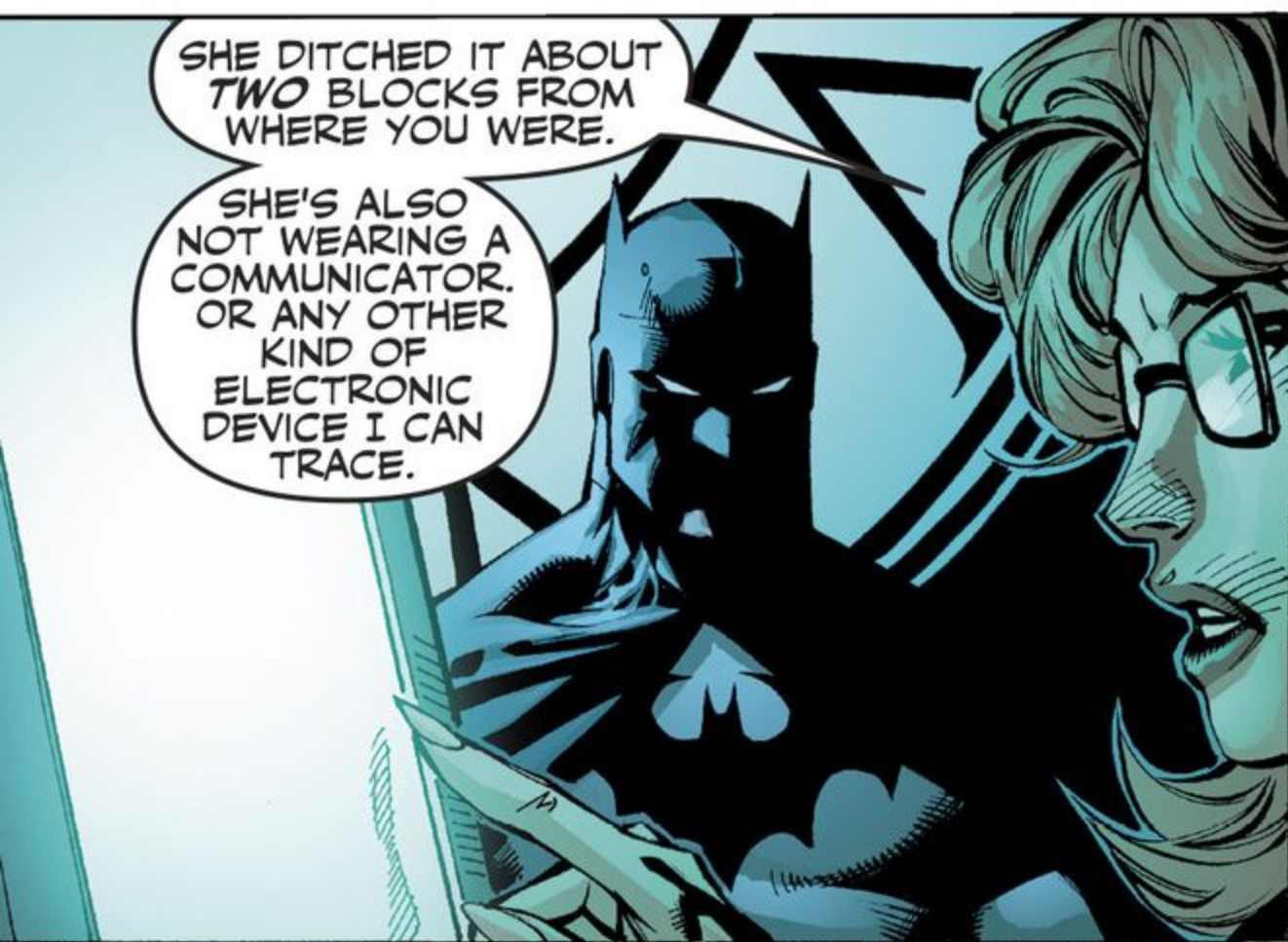
-EEP-

DID MY
DAD EVER GET
USED TO YOUR
SUDDEN
APPEARING
ACT?



SHE
IS RIDING
ONE OF THE
BATBIKES.

WAS.



SHE DITCHED IT ABOUT
TWO BLOCKS FROM
WHERE YOU WERE.

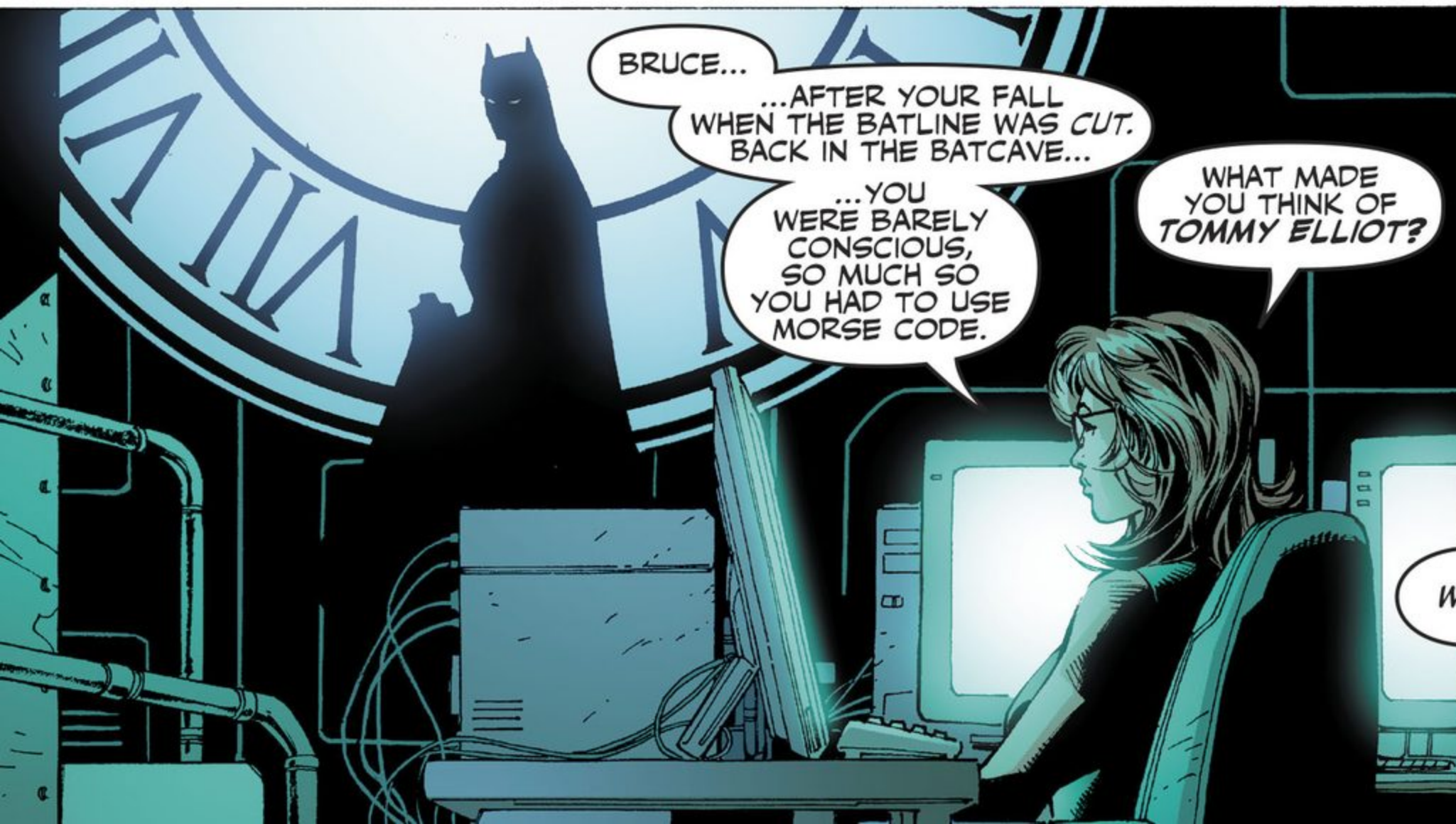
SHE'S ALSO
NOT WEARING A
COMMUNICATOR.
OR ANY OTHER
KIND OF
ELECTRONIC
DEVICE I CAN
TRACE.



LET ME
KNOW WHEN YOU
FIND HER.

SHE'S A
LOOSE END...

...AND
WHOEVER IT IS
WE'RE DEALING
WITH ISN'T GOING
TO LET HER
STAY OUT THERE
FOR LONG.



BRUCE...

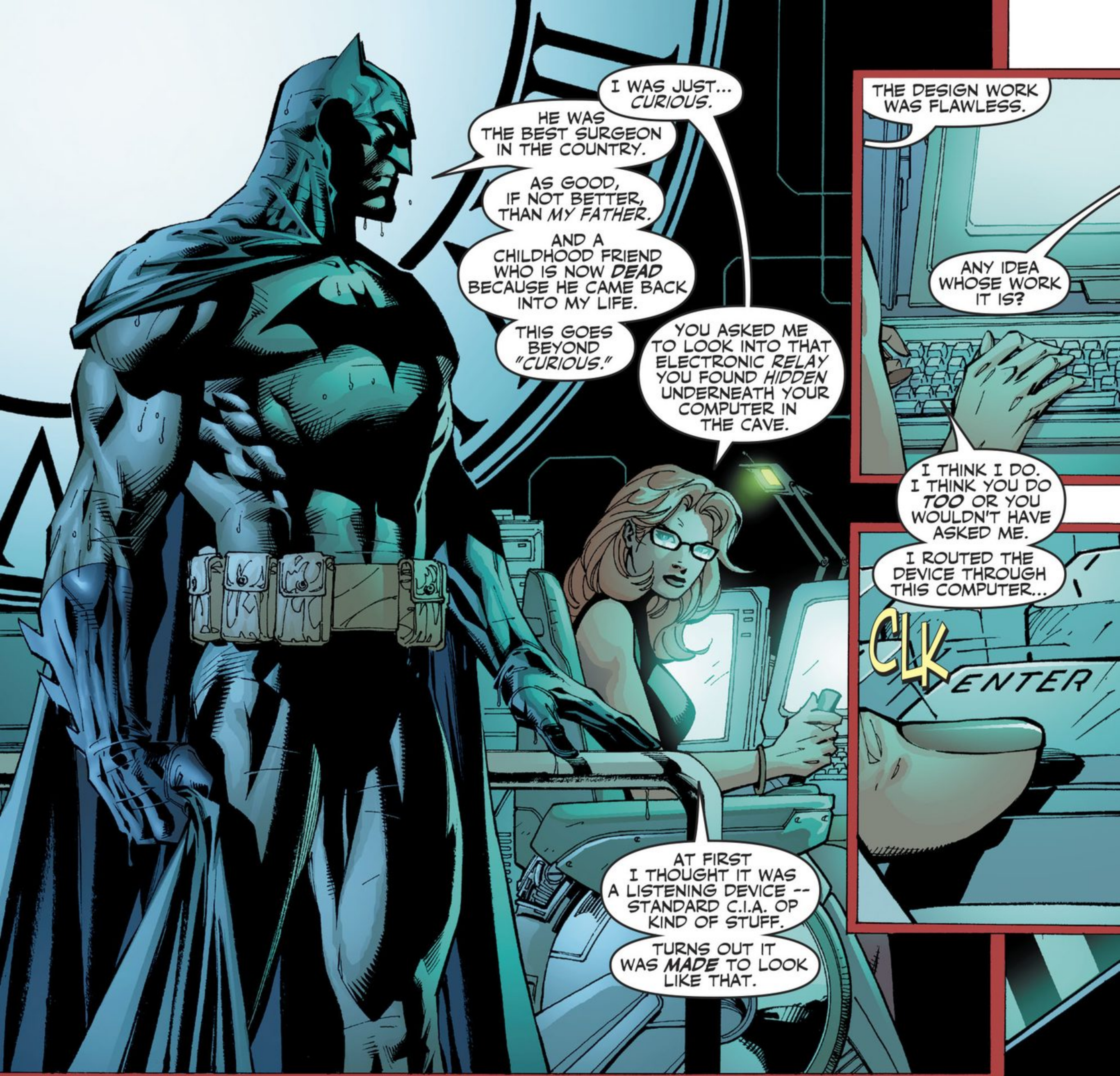
...AFTER YOUR FALL
WHEN THE BATLINE WAS CUT.
BACK IN THE BATCAVE...

...YOU
WERE BARELY
CONSCIOUS,
SO MUCH SO
YOU HAD TO USE
MORSE CODE.

WHAT MADE
YOU THINK OF
TOMMY ELLIOT?

WHY?





I WAS JUST...
CURIOUS.

HE WAS
THE BEST SURGEON
IN THE COUNTRY.

AS GOOD,
IF NOT BETTER,
THAN MY FATHER.

AND A
CHILDHOOD FRIEND
WHO IS NOW *DEAD*
BECAUSE HE CAME BACK
INTO MY LIFE.

THIS GOES
BEYOND
"CURIOUS."

YOU ASKED ME
TO LOOK INTO THAT
ELECTRONIC RELAY
YOU FOUND *HIDDEN*
UNDERNEATH YOUR
COMPUTER IN
THE CAVE.

THE DESIGN WORK
WAS FLAWLESS.

ANY IDEA
WHOSE WORK
IT IS?

I THINK I DO.
I THINK YOU DO
TOO OR YOU
WOULDN'T HAVE
ASKED ME.

I ROUTED THE
DEVICE THROUGH
THIS COMPUTER...

CLK

AT FIRST
I THOUGHT IT WAS
A LISTENING DEVICE --
STANDARD C.I.A. OP
KIND OF STUFF.

TURNS OUT IT
WAS *MADE* TO LOOK
LIKE THAT.

...AND
LOOK WHAT
IT CAN DO...





It takes a few nights, but Oracle manages to arrange a meeting.

She has redirected the traffic. The Gotham City Bridge will be closed until six a.m.

It will not take that long for this to end.



I DIDN'T THINK YOU WOULD COME.

THAT SORT OF THING REQUIRES COURAGE.



WHY?

WHY BETRAY ME?

I WOULD HAVE GIVEN YOU ANYTHING YOU NEEDED.

I HAD GIVEN YOU ANYTHING YOU NEEDED.

A HOME. A PURPOSE.



WHAT THIRTY PIECES OF SILVER WAS PROMISED TO YOU?



HAROLD.

HAPPINESS.

When I first met Harold he was all alone. Friendless. Homeless. But gifted when it came to the repair of machines and electronics.

For a long time he worked in The Cave. Access to the cars, the computers. Always silent... in many ways, as alone as when I found him.



YOU CAN... SPEAK.

Through the years, I used all my resources to find a way to repair Harold's body.

But... medical science is not like crime. There is not always an answer.



THIS WAS SOMETHING FOR ME.

YOU HAD GIVEN ME SO MUCH.



I DIDN'T WANT TO ASK FOR ANYTHING MORE.



HE SAID HE COULD HEAL ME.

MAKE IT SO I WASN'T MUTE.

SO I COULD STAND UP LIKE A MAN.



I THOUGHT THAT EVEN IF I HAD BEEN TRICKED...

YOU ARE MY HERO.

YOU WOULD ALWAYS WIN...

FORGIVE ME...



HE KNEW WHO YOU WERE WITHOUT THE MASK.

HE KNEW ABOUT THE CAVE AND WHAT MY JOB WAS.

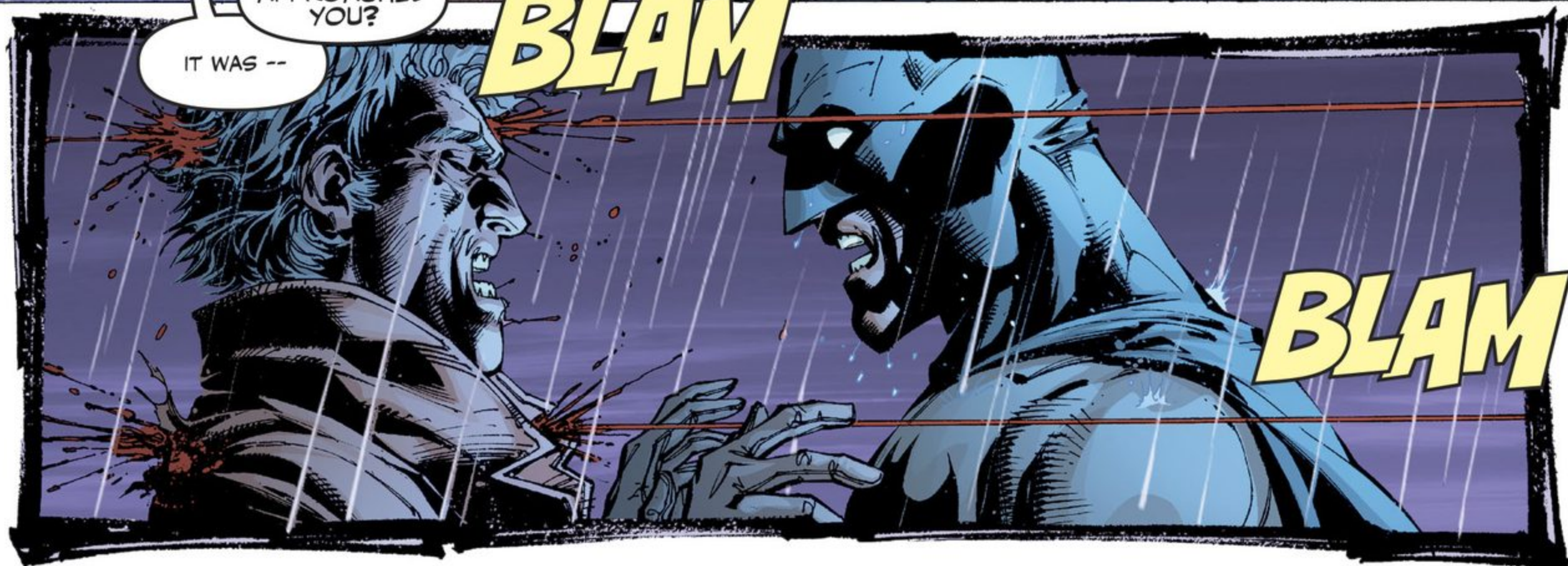
ALL HE ASKED WAS THAT I ADD THE CIRCUIT RELAY TO THE COMPUTER. I BUILT IT TO HIS SPECIFICATIONS, BUT I MADE SURE IT COULDN'T HURT YOU.

WHO APPROACHED YOU?

IT WAS --

HAROLD... I CAN FORGIVE YOU...
THE DESIRE TO BE HAPPY CAN BE VERY POWERFUL WHEN EXPLOITED.

BLAM



BLAM



A SINGLE SOUL
DWELLING IN TWO
BODIES...

WHAT IS
A FRIEND?





THE END





They say when you kill a man,
you not only take away what he was...

...but everything he will ever be.

YOU'VE
MURDERED
HIM.

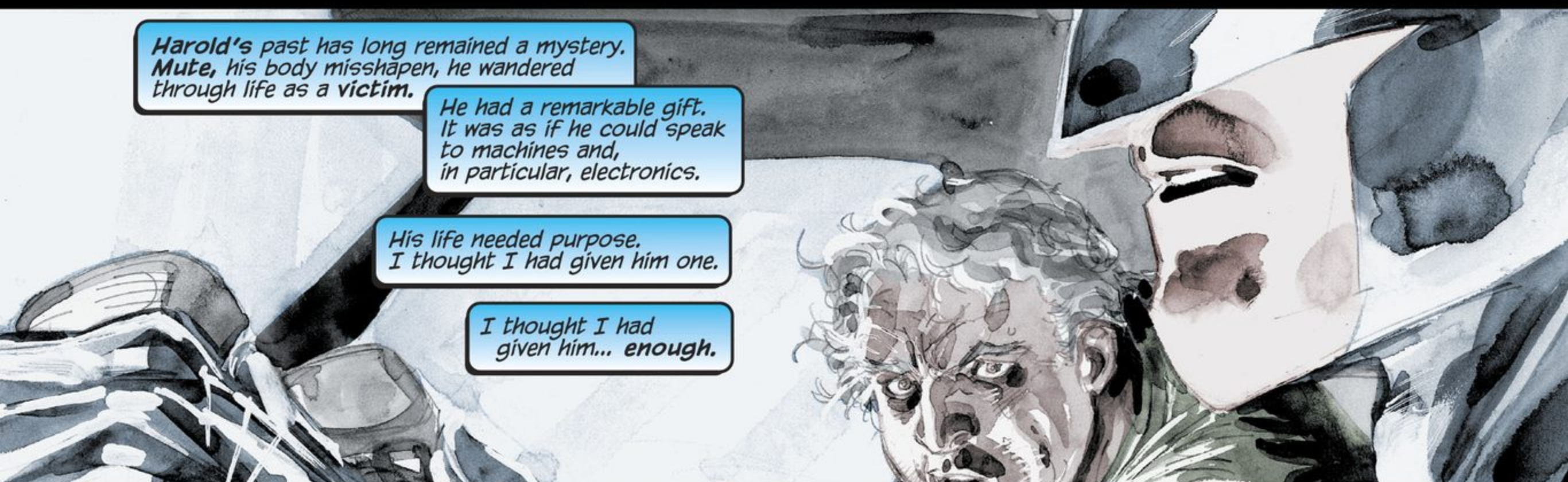


WE SHOULD
BEHAVE TO OUR
FRIENDS AS WE WOULD
WISH OUR FRIENDS
TO BEHAVE
TO US.

I AM
NOT YOUR
FRIEND.

Aristotle.

The killer quotes Aristotle.

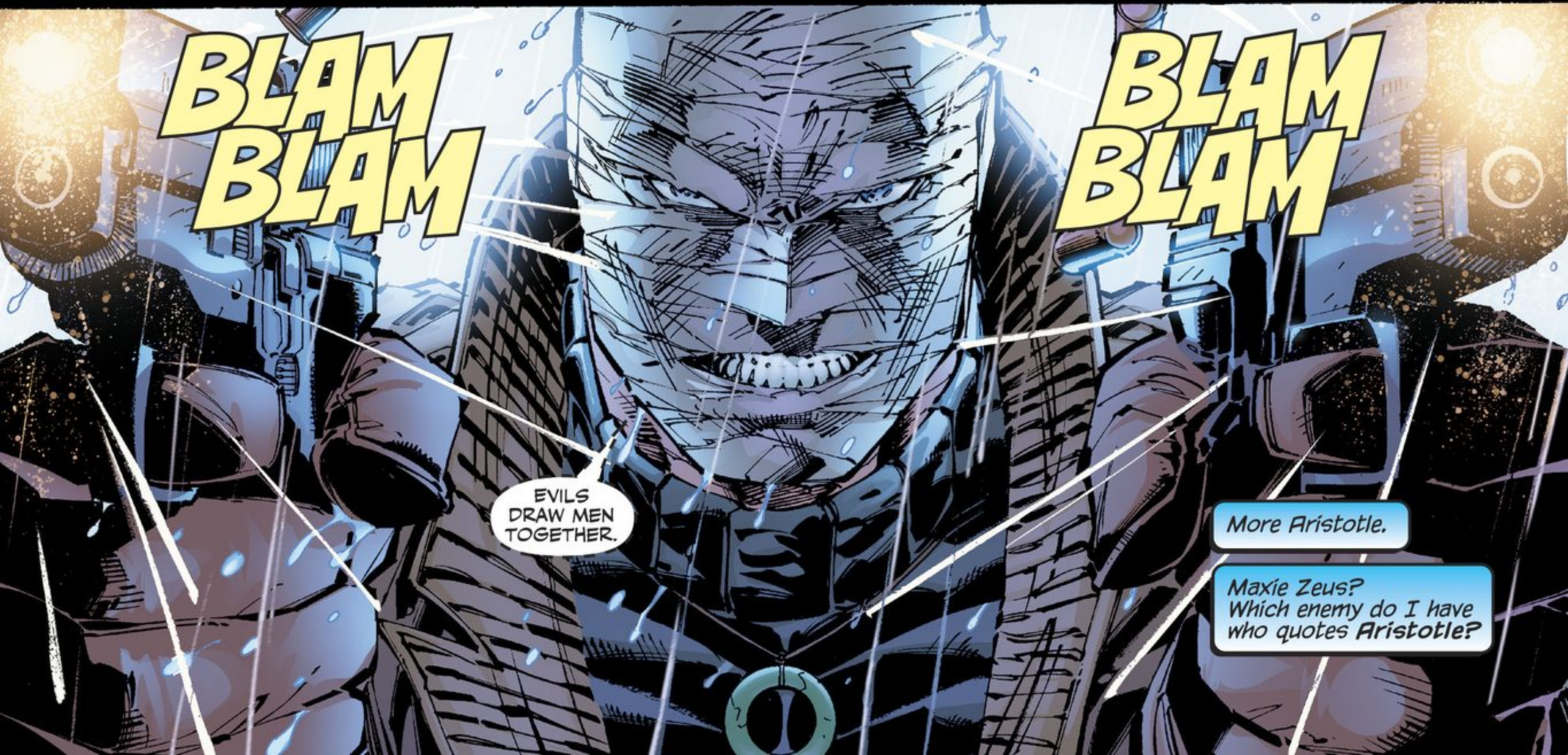


Harold's past has long remained a mystery.
Mute, his body misshapen, he wandered
through life as a victim.

He had a remarkable gift.
It was as if he could speak
to machines and,
in particular, electronics.

His life needed purpose.
I thought I had given him one.

I thought I had
given him... enough.



EVILS
DRAW MEN
TOGETHER.

More Aristotle.

Maxie Zeus?
Which enemy do I have
who quotes Aristotle?

This is not the first time I have been confronted by a man whose face is hidden by bandages.

Previously, that person was revealed to be Clayface pretending to be Jason Todd, my long dead partner.

PHTOOM

**BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM**

Years ago, Harold was found wandering the streets by The Penguin.

Taking advantage of his loneliness, The Penguin used Harold's unique abilities to aid in criminal activity.

I had hoped to have broken the pattern of Harold's trust in those who did not merit it.

He was invaluable to me as a mechanic in the Cave. I gave him unfettered access to the computers.

But, in his silence, there was a yearning to repair his body and voice.

One which my true enemy took advantage of and Harold betrayed me.

It cost him his life.

My world of late has been a series of distractions, ruses and misdirection.

Old villains acting in new ways. Friends twisted into acting as foes.

In the midst of it all, Catwoman and I have begun... a relationship.

Distractions.

**BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM**



Harold's death is meant to keep me off balance.

His betrayal leaves my attention unfocused.

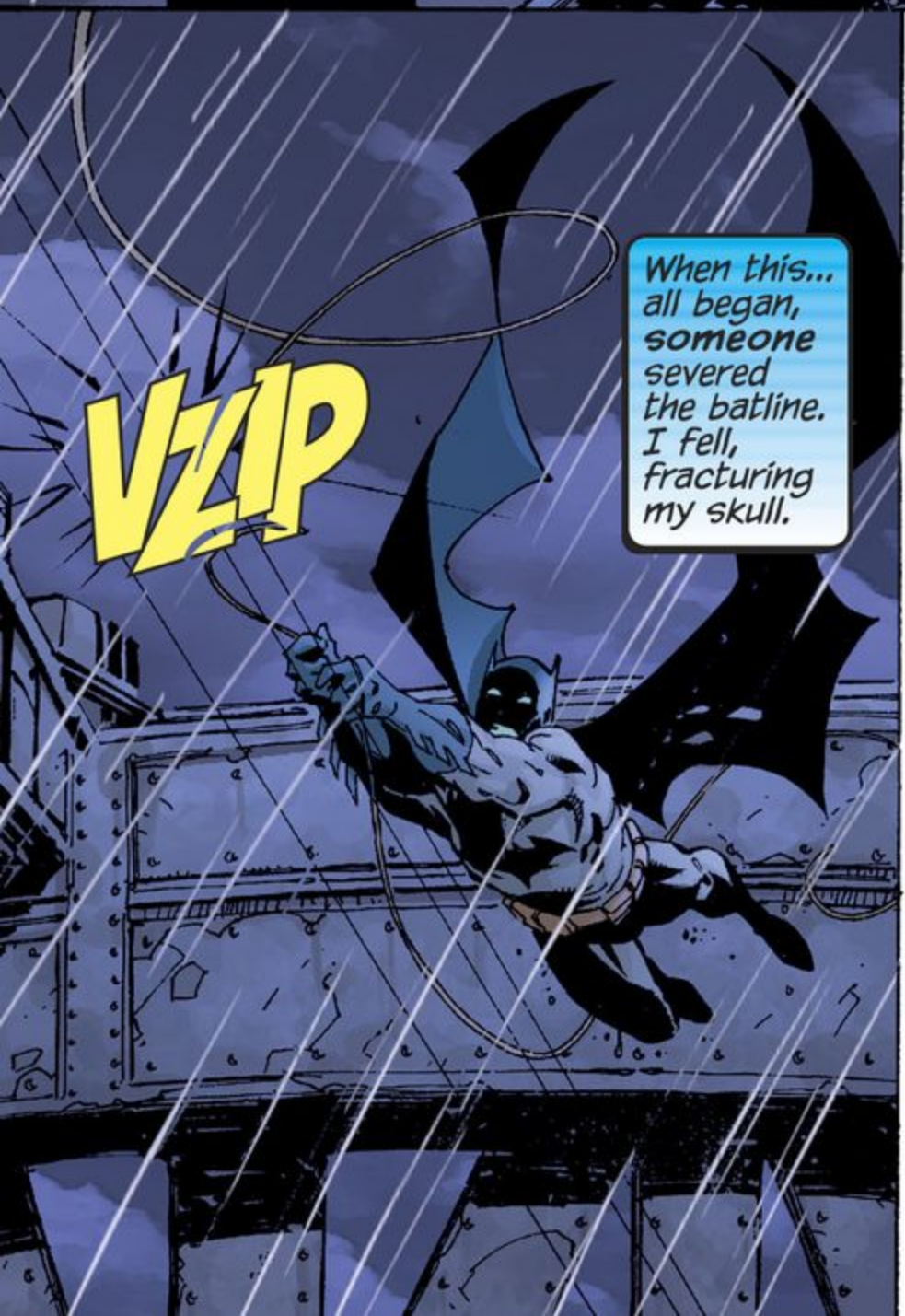
I have to shut all of that out.

My enemy is a marksman.

Possibly the assassin Deadshot...? Or trained by Deadshot...

The guns are twin .45's. He's firing in pairs. Two bullets killed Harold.

The .45 holds twelve rounds. Unless he has one in the chamber.



When this... all began, someone severed the batline. I fell, fracturing my skull.



Since then, I have been searching for that individual.

Someone who has played the heroes and villains in my life like pieces on a chessboard.



His trench coat is nearly generic. Presumably on purpose.

BLAM

BLAM

BLAM

BLAM

I have seen others wear it. Killer Croc. Jim Gordon. "Jason." Even Harold.



PHTOOM

BLAM

BLAM

BLAM

I believe Bruce Wayne owns several.

BLAM

BLAM



I have found my opponent.

THE
GAME ENDS
TONIGHT!

Chapter Twelve
THE END

BLAM



Now, it comes
down to a man
with a gun.

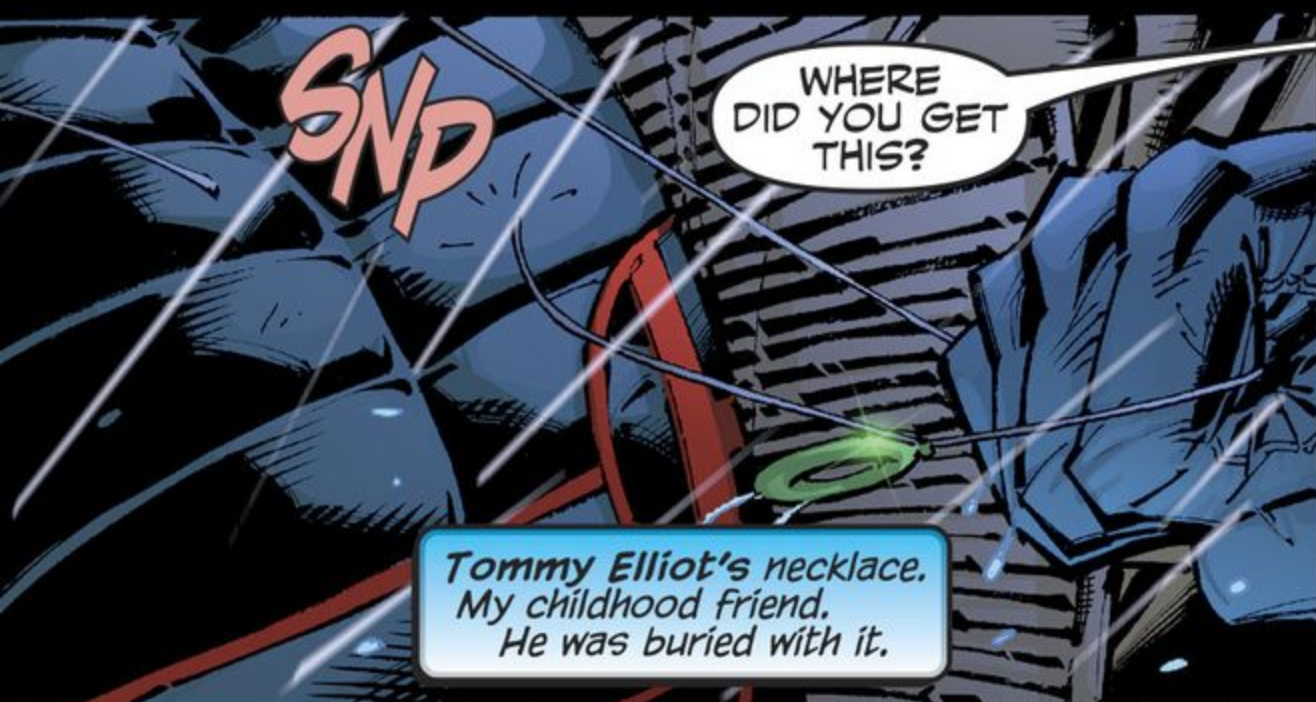
I believe my enemy
knows **everything** in
my life can be traced
back to a single moment.

DKUSH



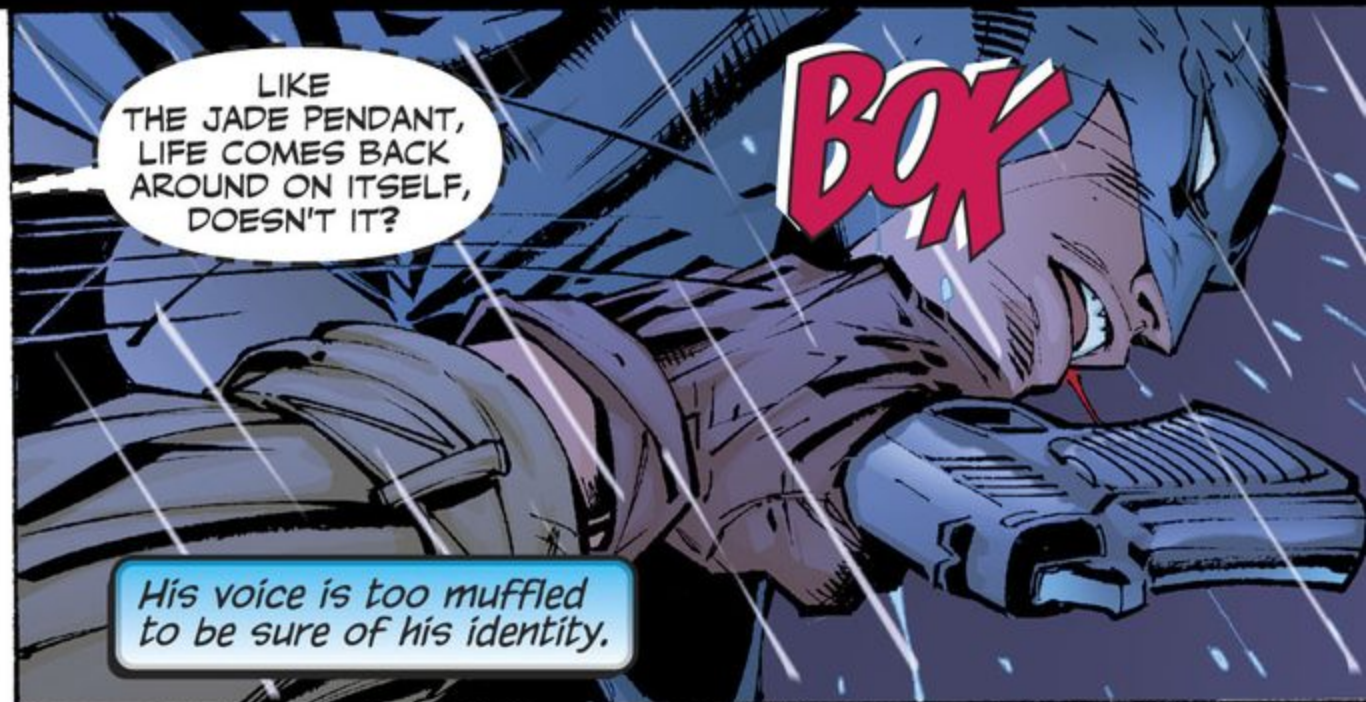
A man.

With a gun.



WHERE
DID YOU GET
THIS?

Tommy Elliot's necklace.
My childhood friend.
He was buried with it.



LIKE
THE JADE PENDANT,
LIFE COMES BACK
AROUND ON ITSELF,
DOESN'T IT?

His voice is too muffled
to be sure of his identity.



Tommy's mother gave it to him.



I TOLD YOU *ONCE*
TO GIVE IT BACK,
OR I'D HURT YOU
SO BAD --

WHAM



-- BRUCE.

He knows who I am.

He tells a story only Tommy and I would know.



So many deceptions...



YOU DON'T GET TO PEEK BEHIND THE CURTAIN... YET.

... Tommy Elliot is dead.

GAH!

THICK



WHY HIDE YOUR FACE?



WHO ARE YOU?!

DO YOU THINK IT WAS BY COINCIDENCE THAT WE'RE HERE?

ON THIS BRIDGE?

ON A RAINY NIGHT?



THERE'S... THERE'S BEEN AN ACCIDENT.

MY... MOM AND DAD... THEIR CAR...



I DO NOT
KNOW *HOW* YOU
COULD HAVE
HEARD THESE
STORIES--

--BUT, *DOCTOR
THOMAS WAYNE*
DID EVERYTHING IN
HIS POWER TO SAVE
THE *ELLIOTS*.

YES, JUST LIKE
YOU *PROMISED* ME
HE WOULD.



HE LOST
MY DAD THOUGH.
LEFT ME WITH MY
MOTH-*URGH!*



"STICK A
NEEDLE,"
BRUCE.

WHACK

"Stick a needle."
An expression
that Tommy and I
shared as children...



CHUK

IS THAT
WHAT ALL THIS
IS ABOUT?
A CHILD'S
BROKEN
PROMISE?



NO,
BRUCE.

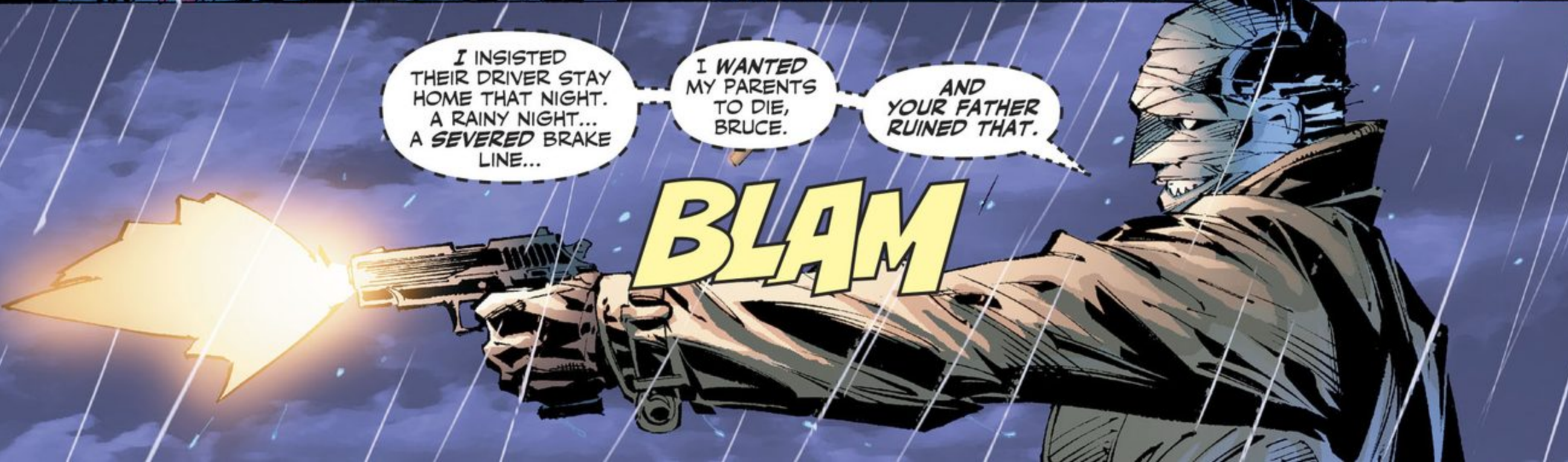
BOFF

I WAS
NEVER ANGRY THAT
YOUR FATHER LET
MY FATHER DIE ON
THE OPERATING
TABLE.

IT WAS
THAT HE LET
MY MOTHER
LIVE.



WHAT...?



I INSISTED
THEIR DRIVER STAY
HOME THAT NIGHT.
A RAINY NIGHT...
A SEVERED BRAKE
LINE...

I WANTED
MY PARENTS
TO DIE,
BRUCE.

AND
YOUR FATHER
RUINED THAT.

BLAM

BOOM!



YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW LUCKY YOU WERE TO BE AN ORPHAN.

ALL THAT MONEY BECAME YOURS TO SPEND.

WHEN I HAD TO WAIT YEARS -- YEARS -- WAITING FOR MY MOTHER TO DIE FROM CANCER OF ALL THINGS.

PRETENDING TO BE THE GOOD SON...

SINCE I KNOW YOU WERE COUNTING, YES, I HAD *ONE* BULLET LEFT IN THE CHAMBER.

DIDN'T SEE ME STRAP THE C-4 TO THE BATMOBILE WHILE YOU AND HAROLD HAD YOUR SHORT-LIVED REUNION, DID YOU?

NOW, AS MUCH AS I WOULD LIKE TO END IT HERE, THE GAME IS NOT OVER YET.

I'M TAKING YOU TO ARKHAM WHERE *EVERYONE* ELSE GETS THE PLEASURE OF UNMASKING --

PUT YOUR HANDS IN THE AIR AND GET DOWN ON YOUR KNEES!

NOW.

JAMES GORDON. THE FRIEND IN NEED.

AND WHO'S *THAT* YOU'VE GOT WITH YOU?

TAKE THE *SHNN*-SHOT, JIM.

DAMMIT... THEY'RE TOO CLOSE TOGETHER...

HARVEY... WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

YOU KNOW THE AGREEMENT --

YEAH, WELL --

ANY
GOOD LAWYER
WILL TELL YOU
AGREEMENTS
WERE MEANT TO
BE BROKEN.

**BLAM
BLAM**

NO!

**CHK
CHK**

*Harvey Dent was once my friend.
A headstrong District Attorney
whose life was shattered when
acid was hurled in his face...*

*...unleashing a **second** personality--
the murderous criminal **Two-Face**.*

Harvey's face has been repaired.

His sudden appearance here is...unexpected.



Have I lost in Tommy a friendship...

...only to regain in Harvey one I'd lost?

LOOK, I SHOT "ELLIOT" IN THAT ALLEY. IT'S HOW I KNEW THE JOKER WAS INNOCENT.

Nightvision Engaged.



YOU SHOT DOCTOR THOMAS ELLIOT?

YEAH, WELL, THERE'S NOT A LOT OF VITAL ORGANS YOU CAN HIT WHEN THEY'RE MADE OUT OF CLAY.

GIVE ME THE GUN.

YOU CAN HAVE IT.

IT'S YOURS, ANYWAY.

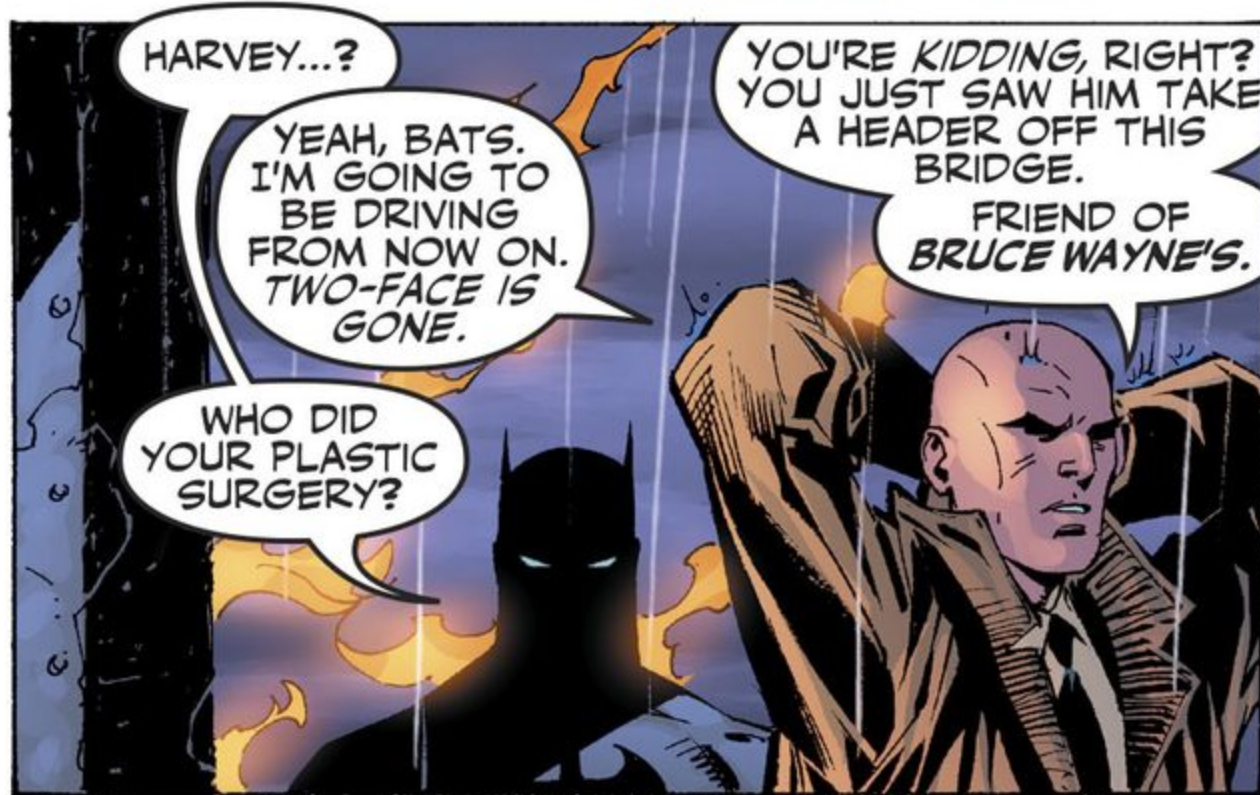
WHAT?!

IT'S LIKE I TOLD YOU, JIMBO. YOUR OLD POLICE WEAPON WAS USED TO "KILL" TOMMY ELLIOT.

Under those bandages --

-- I have to know.





Gotham City.
Two weeks later.

WHEN YOU
DON'T WANT TO
BE FOUND, YOU
DON'T WANT TO
BE FOUND.

THAT'S
RIGHT.

LET ME GUESS.
YOU *SCREWED UP*.
YOU'RE TRYING TO
FIGURE IT ALL
OUT.

YOU'RE ANGRY
WITH ME, *BATMAN*,
EVERYONE...

...BUT MOSTLY
YOU'RE MAD AT
YOURSELF.

GO TO
HELL.

HEY, IF
I WANT ABUSE,
I KNOW A LOT OF
OTHER PLACES
I CAN BE.

SCARECROW
REALLY
MESSED
WITH MY
MIND.

I KNOW THE
FEELING. /VY
DID A NUMBER
ON ME.

CAN YOU
GET A HOLD
OF IT?

YOU'VE
CHANGED
COSTUMES
THROUGH THE
YEARS.

EVEN
CHANGED
SIDES, IF
SOME OF
THOSE
STORIES
ARE
TRUE.

WAS IT
WORTH IT?

...

YES.
AS LONG
AS YOU'RE
DOING IT FOR
YOURSELF...

...AND NOT
FOR WHAT
SOMEONE ELSE
THINKS OF
YOU.

I HEARD
THOMAS ELLIOT IS
DEAD *AGAIN*.

HEARD
THAT, TOO.

GOOD.

BASTARD.



The Cave.

I'VE BEEN TO PHILADELPHIA. THIS WAS PLANNED FOR MORE THAN A YEAR. MAYBE TWO. I KEEP THINKING ABOUT "THE PURLOINED LETTER." HOW THE ANSWER WAS THERE ALL ALONG.

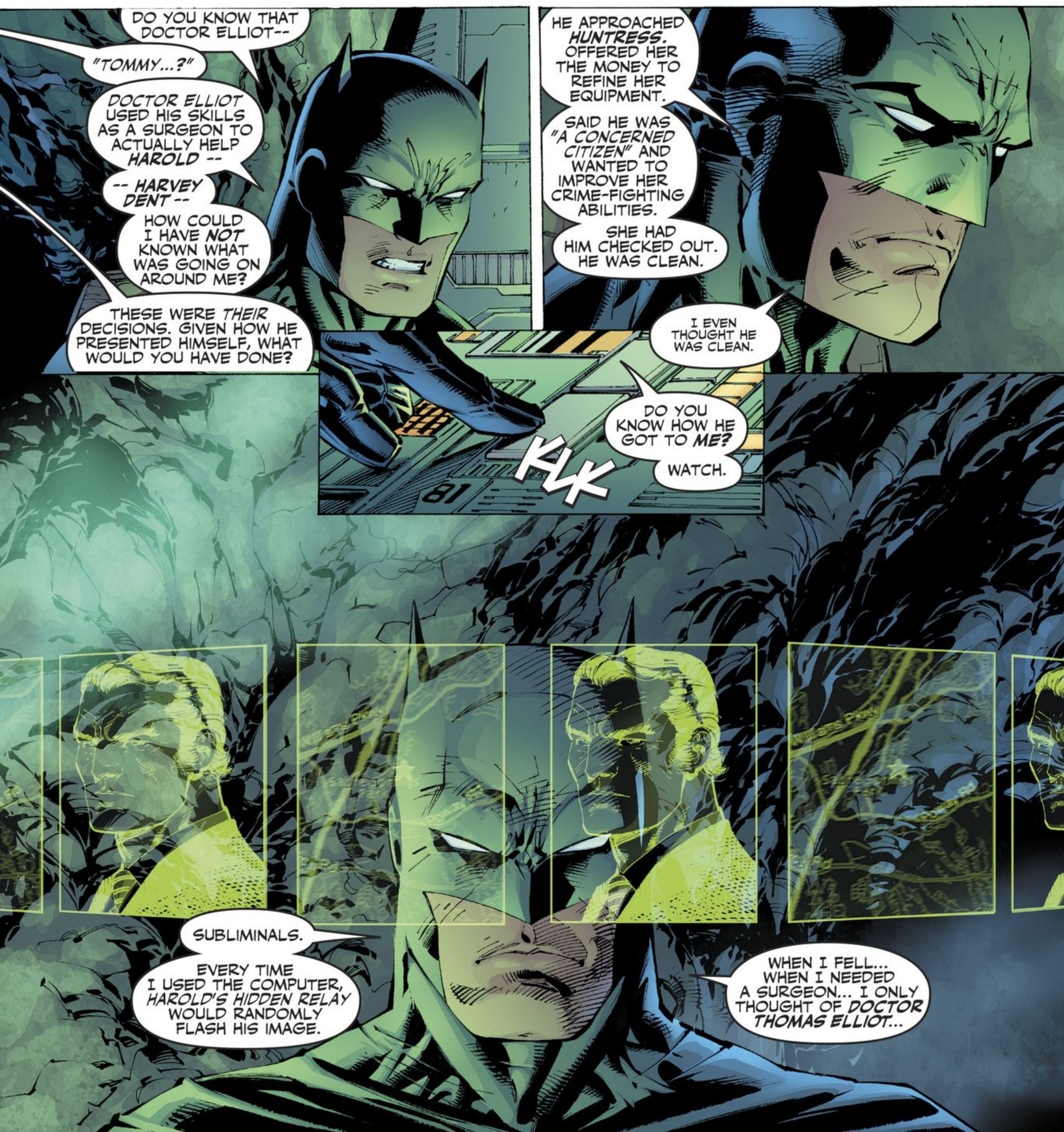
BRUCE...

SOMETIMES DETECTIVE WORK IS LIKE FINDING YOUR EYEGLASSES.

THEY'RE ALWAYS IN THE LAST PLACE YOU LOOK BECAUSE AFTER THAT, YOU'VE FOUND THEM.

I have brought Clark into this.

In an odd way, he can sometimes be less emotionally involved than I can.



DO YOU KNOW THAT DOCTOR ELLIOT--

"TOMMY...?"

DOCTOR ELLIOT USED HIS SKILLS AS A SURGEON TO ACTUALLY HELP HAROLD --

-- HARVEY DENT --

HOW COULD I HAVE NOT KNOWN WHAT WAS GOING ON AROUND ME?

THESE WERE THEIR DECISIONS. GIVEN HOW HE PRESENTED HIMSELF, WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE DONE?

HE APPROACHED HUNTRESS. OFFERED HER THE MONEY TO REFINE HER EQUIPMENT.

SAID HE WAS "A CONCERNED CITIZEN" AND WANTED TO IMPROVE HER CRIME-FIGHTING ABILITIES.

SHE HAD HIM CHECKED OUT. HE WAS CLEAN.

I EVEN THOUGHT HE WAS CLEAN.

DO YOU KNOW HOW HE GOT TO ME?

WATCH.

KLK

SUBLIMINALS.

EVERY TIME I USED THE COMPUTER, HAROLD'S HIDDEN RELAY WOULD RANDOMLY FLASH HIS IMAGE.

WHEN I FELT... WHEN I NEEDED A SURGEON... I ONLY THOUGHT OF DOCTOR THOMAS ELLIOT...



BRUCE...
...WHAT
CAN I DO
TO HELP?

I SEARCHED
THE HARBOR.
WITH THE STORM,
HIS BODY WAS
PROBABLY
DRAGGED OUT
TO SEA.



I KEEP
THINKING HOW
HE FOUND ME
IN METROPOLIS.
AND OTHER
PLACES, I KNOW
I WAS BEING
WATCHED.

I THINK...
NO, I *KNOW* HE DID
SOMETHING WHEN
HE OPERATED
ON ME.

I NEED YOU
TO USE YOUR X-RAY
AND MICROSCOPIC
VISION ON MY
HEAD.



THERE *IS*
SOMETHING...
AT THE BASE
OF YOUR
SKULL... SO
TINY...

A HOMING
DEVICE?

POSSIBLY.



BURN IT.

I COULD
HURT --
DO IT.



BRUCE... YOU
CAN'T BLAME
YOURSELF...



I HAVE
WORK TO
DO.

THEN,
I'LL STAY
AND --

-- NO,
YOU'VE DONE
ENOUGH.

BUT,
CLARK...
I...

THANK
YOU.



*Elliot couldn't
have done this alone.
He needed contacts.
Someone they all
would trust.*

Arkham
Asylum.

THIS WILL
NOT BE RECORDED.
NO ONE IS LISTENING
IN. I THINK YOU
KNOW *WHY*.

I HONESTLY
DIDN'T THINK YOU
WERE CAPABLE
OF IT.

"CRIMINAL
MASTERMIND"
AND YOU DON'T
COME TOGETHER
IMMEDIATELY.

THAT
WAS SORT OF
THE POINT,
WASN'T IT?

WAS IT?

YOU STILL
DON'T HAVE ALL
THE PIECES.
THAT'S WHY
YOU'RE HERE.

THIS IS
FUN.

PRESUMABLY, IT
ALL BEGAN WITH
KILLER CROC
KIDNAPPING
THE BOY.

YOU
DIDN'T
NEED THE
RANSOM, DID
YOU? ELLIOT'S
WEALTH
FINANCED
ALL OF IT.

ESSENTIALLY.
BUT, YOU CAN
NEVER REALLY
HAVE *ENOUGH*
MONEY,
RIGHT?

YOU'D KNOW
BETTER THAN
ANYONE.

WHERE
DID YOU GET THE
KRYPTONITE FOR
IVY'S LIPSTICK?

WHERE
DID YOU GET
IT FOR THAT
RING?

BUT, YOU
DIDN'T HEAR
THAT FROM
ME.

YOU HAVE
ENEMIES IN
VERY HIGH
PLACES.

SO, YOU
PROMISED CROC
YOU COULD
SURGICALLY CURE
HIS MUTATION
FOR A PRICE.

YOU HAVE
TO REMEMBER
THAT WE'RE NOT
DEALING WITH
A BRAIN-TRUST
THERE.

CROC NEVER
QUITE UNDERSTOOD
THAT *WE* INFECTED
HIM WITH A VIRUS.

HE WAS
DESPERATE FOR
A CURE AND WE'D
HAVE PROVIDED IT
"DURING
SURGERY."

THE ANTIDOTE
ISN'T HARD TO
FIGURE OUT. I IMAGINE
WHEREVER *THE FEDS*
HAVE HIM, HE'S BEEN
RESTORED.

SCARECROW
DID THE
EVALUATIONS.

EVERYBODY WANTS
SOMETHING.

POISON
IVY?

MONEY. AND SHE'S
GOT A THING ABOUT
CATWOMAN.

HARLEY
QUINN?

LOVE.
GETTING TO
WORK WITH
THE JOKER.

THE
JOKER... HE
COULDN'T HAVE
BEEN EASY.

AT FIRST.
WHEN HE HEARD
"THE JASON TODD
GAG," HE
COULDN'T
RESIST.

CLAYFACE?

MONEY. ANOTHER
MORON. *YAWN*. WHY DO
I HAVE THE SENSE YOU
KNOW ALL THIS
ALREADY?

YOU
ANGERED
RA'S.

HE
WASN'T
REALLY
PLAYING.

HE GOT
INVOLVED BECAUSE
YOU HAD USED ONE
OF THE LAZARUS PITS
AND HE WANTED
ME TO FIND OUT
WHO IT WAS.

IT'S WHY
YOU LEFT THE
ASH IN THE BACK
OF THE ARMORED
TRUCK. YOU HOPED
I WOULD REMOVE
RA'S FROM THE
GAME.

HOW DO
YOU KNOW IT
WAS *ME*?

ELLIOT'S
MEDICAL RECORDS
ARE IN STORAGE IN
PHILADELPHIA.

YOU
DIDN'T USE
YOUR *REAL*
NAME.

BUT...
"ARTHUR WYNNE."
THE MAN WHO INVENTED
THE CROSSWORD
PUZZLE.

THAT WAS
THE MISSING
PIECE.



RIDDLER.

ARTHUR WYNNE.
I ALWAYS LOVED
THE NAME. WYNNE
AS IN... "WIN."

WHAT
WAS IT?
BRAIN
TUMOR?

GREAT
RIDDLE.
HOW DO YOU
CHEAT
DEATH?

THE
LAZARUS
PIT.



YOU WERE
DIAGNOSED AS
TERMINAL.

WHEN YOU
CAME OUT OF
THE PIT, YOU
MUST'VE BEEN
QUITE MAD.

NOT MAD.

ANGRY.



I USED
TO BE A
SOMEBODY
IN THIS
TOWN.

NOW,
EVERYBODY HAS
A GIMMICK.

I WAS
GOING TO
SHOW THEM
ALL.

AND I
DID.

DOCTOR
ELLIOT
MUST'VE
BEEN QUITE
IMPRESSED
BY YOUR
MIRACULOUS
RECOVERY.

CANCER.



IT BRINGS
PEOPLE TOGETHER
IN A WAY -- WELL,
YOU DON'T HAVE IT,
SO YOU WOULDN'T
UNDERSTAND.

BUT ELLIOT'S
MOTHER DIED
FROM IT.

I THOUGHT
HE'D PAY A
FORTUNE FOR
THE CURE.

TURNS OUT,
HE WANTED
SOMETHING
MORE.

HE KNEW
I WAS FROM
GOTHAM CITY
AND...

...MY,
OH, MY,
DID HE HAVE
A MAD ON FOR
BRUCE WAYNE.



SO...
YOU CAME
UP WITH THE
BANDAGED
MAN IN THE
TRENCH
COAT.

"HUSH."

HUSH...?

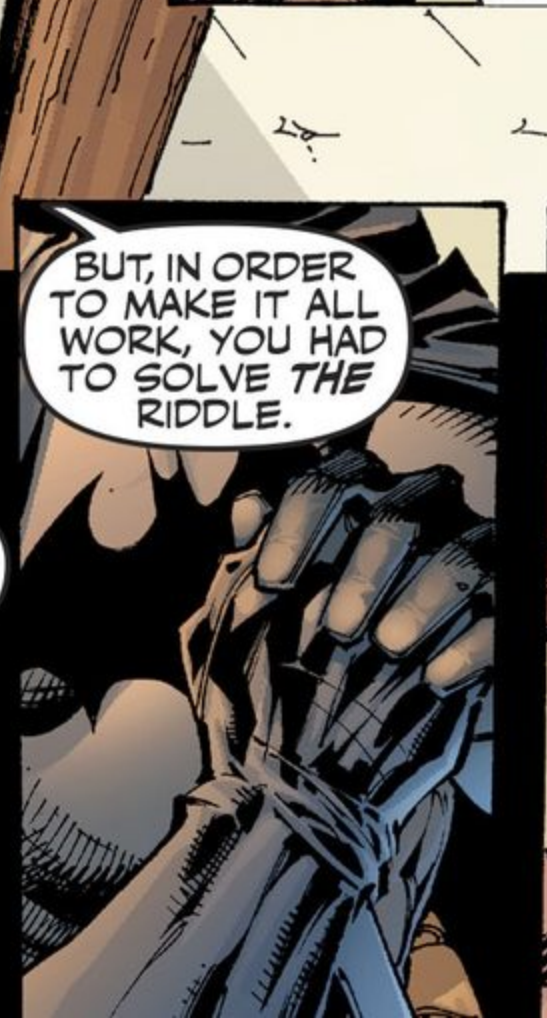
IT STARTED
AS A JOKE.
YOU KNOW,
WE HAD TO KEEP
IT SECRET.



THEN,
SCARECROW
STARTS SINGING
THE SONG.
"HUSH, LITTLE
BABY..."

IT'S
ABOUT A KID
WHO CAN'T BE
SATISFIED.

AND IT
STUCK.



BUT, IN ORDER
TO MAKE IT ALL
WORK, YOU HAD
TO SOLVE THE
RIDDLE.



YES. THE
LAZARUS PIT
GIVES YOU A
UNIQUE KIND
OF...

...CLARITY.



RIDDLE
ME THIS...
...WHO IS THAT
UNDER BATMAN'S
MASK?

AND NOW,
THE WORLD IS
MY OYSTER.



RIGHT,
BRUCE?



WHAT TIME
IS IT WHEN
AN ELEPHANT
SITS ON A
FENCE?



WHAT...?

WHAT TIME
IS IT WHEN
AN ELEPHANT
SITS ON A
FENCE?

"TIME TO
GET A NEW
FENCE."

EVERYONE
KNOWS THAT ONE.
IT'S WORTHLESS.

THAT'S WHY
I HAVE **NOTHING**
TO FEAR FROM
YOU.

YOU **HAD** TO
TELL ELLIOT--
BUT NO ONE
ELSE.

NOT EVEN
CLAYFACE WHEN
HE WAS PLAYING
"ROBIN."

I KNOW YOU,
EDWARD NIGMA.

MAYBE
BETTER THAN
YOU KNOW
YOURSELF.

RIDDLES ARE
YOUR COMPULSION.
YOUR ADDICTION.

AND
A RIDDLE THAT
EVERYONE KNOWS
THE ANSWER TO IS...
"WORTHLESS."



IN CASE YOU EVER AGAIN **DO** DECIDE TO TRADE ON MY IDENTITY...
...KEEP IN MIND, **RA'S AL GHUL** IS STILL LOOKING FOR WHO USED HIS PIT.

QUESTION: HOW WOULD YOU FARE AGAINST THE **ENTIRE** LEAGUE OF ASSASSINS...?

YOU HAVE ENEMIES IN VERY HIGH PLACES, **EDWARD**.
GET OUT.

ONE LAST THING.
WHY JASON?
WHY BRING THE BOY INTO IT?

QUESTION: HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU BEATEN ME?
ANSWERS: FIVE. TEN. A HUNDRED!
BUT... QUESTION: WHAT IS **BATMAN'S** GREATEST DEFEAT?

ANSWER: THE DEATH OF **ROBIN**.
DIDN'T LIKE HAVING YOUR NOSE RUBBED IN IT, DID YOU?
HIS GRAVE IS EMPTY.
WHERE IS JASON'S BODY NOW?

THAT IS A RIDDLE, ISN'T IT?



WHAT HAPPENED?
HE FELL.
NEED ANY HELP?

NO. WE'RE DONE.



I buried **Harold** on a hillside overlooking Wayne Manor.

His home was here. I want him to be safe.

It took some doing, but I finally found his **last name** for the marker.



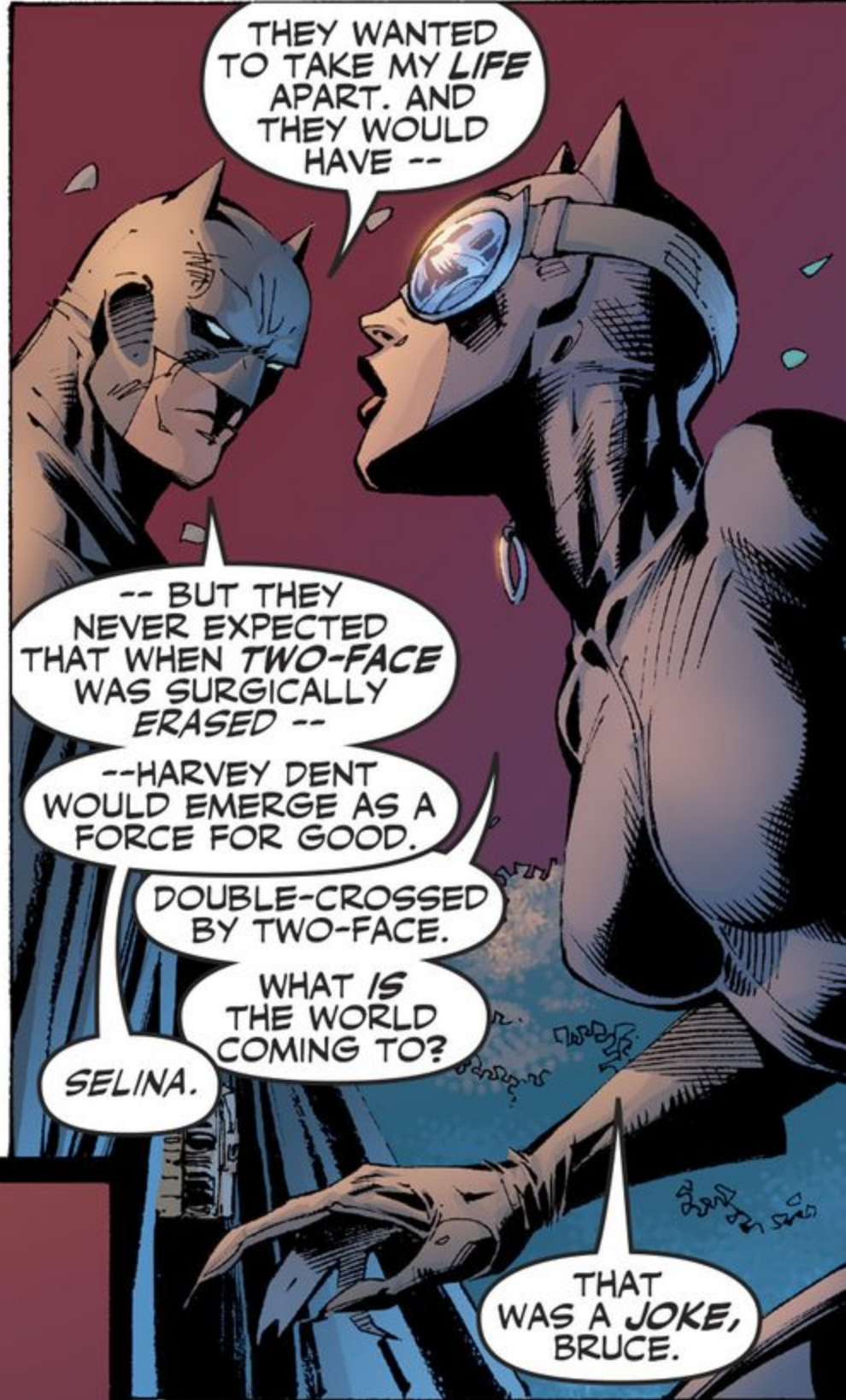
I have been to too many funerals.



SO...

THE RIDDLER...?!

One question remains. Selina and I both know it.



THEY WANTED TO TAKE MY **LIFE** APART. AND THEY WOULD HAVE --

-- BUT THEY NEVER EXPECTED THAT WHEN **TWO-FACE** WAS SURGICALLY ERASED --

--HARVEY DENT WOULD EMERGE AS A FORCE FOR GOOD.

DOUBLE-CROSSED BY TWO-FACE.

WHAT **IS** THE WORLD COMING TO?

SELINA.

THAT WAS A JOKE, BRUCE.



I...I AM NOT VERY GOOD AT THIS.

HAVING FRIENDS. PARTNERS.

IT ALL ENDS IN BETRAYAL AND DEATH.

IF I EVER COULD DO IT, THEN I LOST IT THE NIGHT MY PARENTS WERE MURDERED.

TELL THAT TO NIGHTWING. ROBIN. ORACLE.

DO I NEED TO GO ON?



WE BOTH KNOW WHAT **SCARECROW** SAID ABOUT SOMETHING ELSE AFFECTING MY MIND.

YES. AND THAT COULD'VE BEEN A **BLUFF**.

OR THOSE **SUBLIMINALS** YOU TOLD ME ABOUT.

OR. WE BOTH COULD BE UNDER IVY'S SPELL--



HUSH...



WHY WOULD YOU SAY THAT?

OW! YOU'RE HURTING ME.

WHAT THE HELL IS WRONG WITH YOU, BRUCE?



Was she part of this...? Can I take that chance?



BRUCE...?



OH.

SO, IT'S OVER.

IF YOU WANT ME TO SAY, "I LOVE YOU..."



LISTEN, I DON'T NEED TO KNOW IF THIS STARTED OUT AS A SPELL.

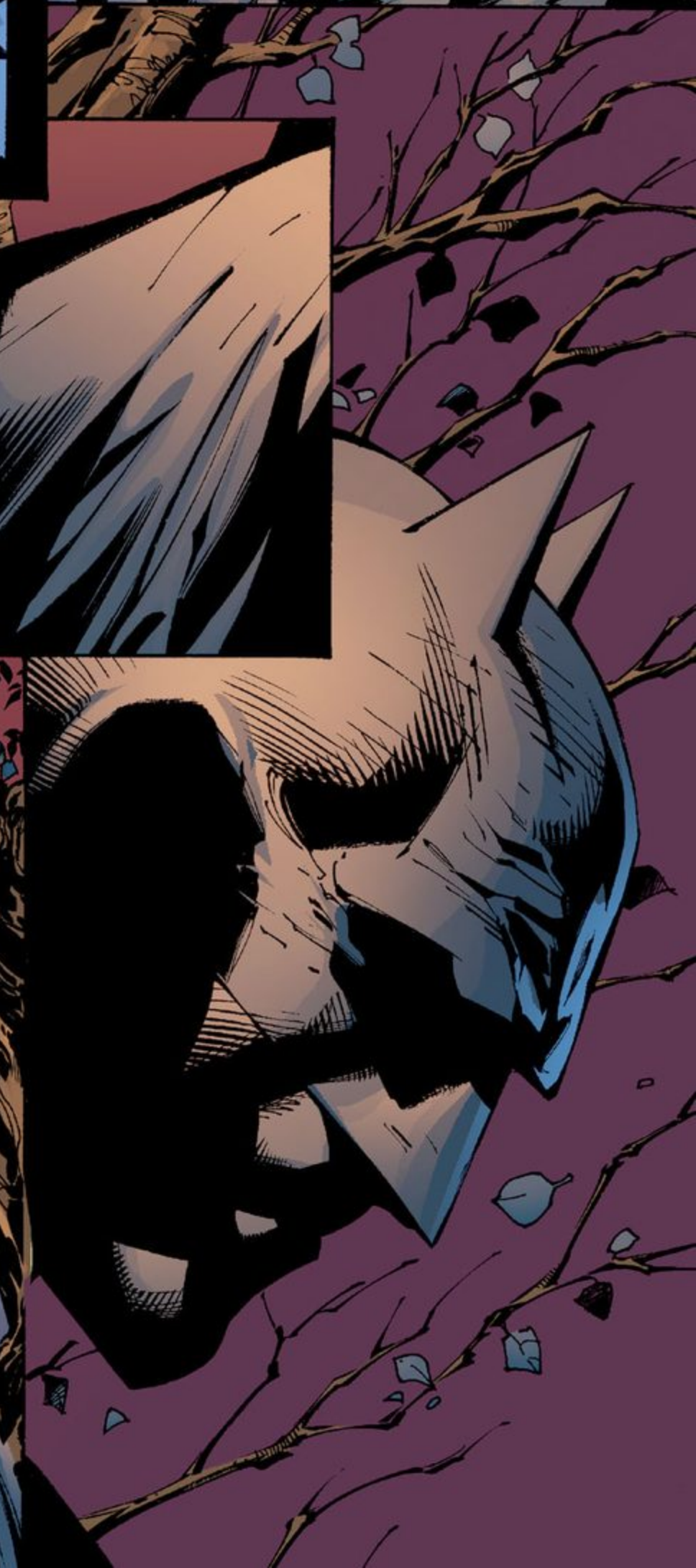
FORGET ABOUT BEING A DETECTIVE FOR ONCE.

WE ARE WHO WE ARE. THAT'S WHY THIS WORKS.



MAYBE, SOMEDAY, YOU'LL COME TO TRUST THAT.

UNTIL THEN...





Someday...

The
End

BATMAN: HUSH
HARDCOVER VOLUME 1



BATMAN #608
SECOND PRINTING



JM LEE
2001



BATMAN #608
SPECIAL PROMOTIONAL COVER

BATMAN
DOUBLE FEATURE









BATMAN: HUSH
HARDCOVER VOLUME 2



BATMAN: HUSH
SOFTCOVER VOLUME 1



BATMAN: HUSH
SOFTCOVER VOLUME 2



93



J/MLEE
2004
SINCE

ABSOLUTE BATMAN: HUSH



HUSH
ANNOTATED BY JIM LEE
2005

PAGE 1, PANEL 1: The 3 V's on the lock stand for the first letter of my wife's name—Vorhies. As with most things set in a fictional story, name brands and the like have to be fake but feel real. So in coming up with this lock or any kind of product in story, I create a fictitious backstory, a fake company in my mind which produces said item and I spend maybe five seconds and think logically of the look this type of company may produce. Overthinking it? Yeah, maybe, but it beats having generic-looking items in story or using “clever” alterations of real-life name brands, which I personally find distracting.

PAGE 14: Eagle-eyed gun enthusiasts will spot the modified HK MPA5s the Gotham SWAT team is using.

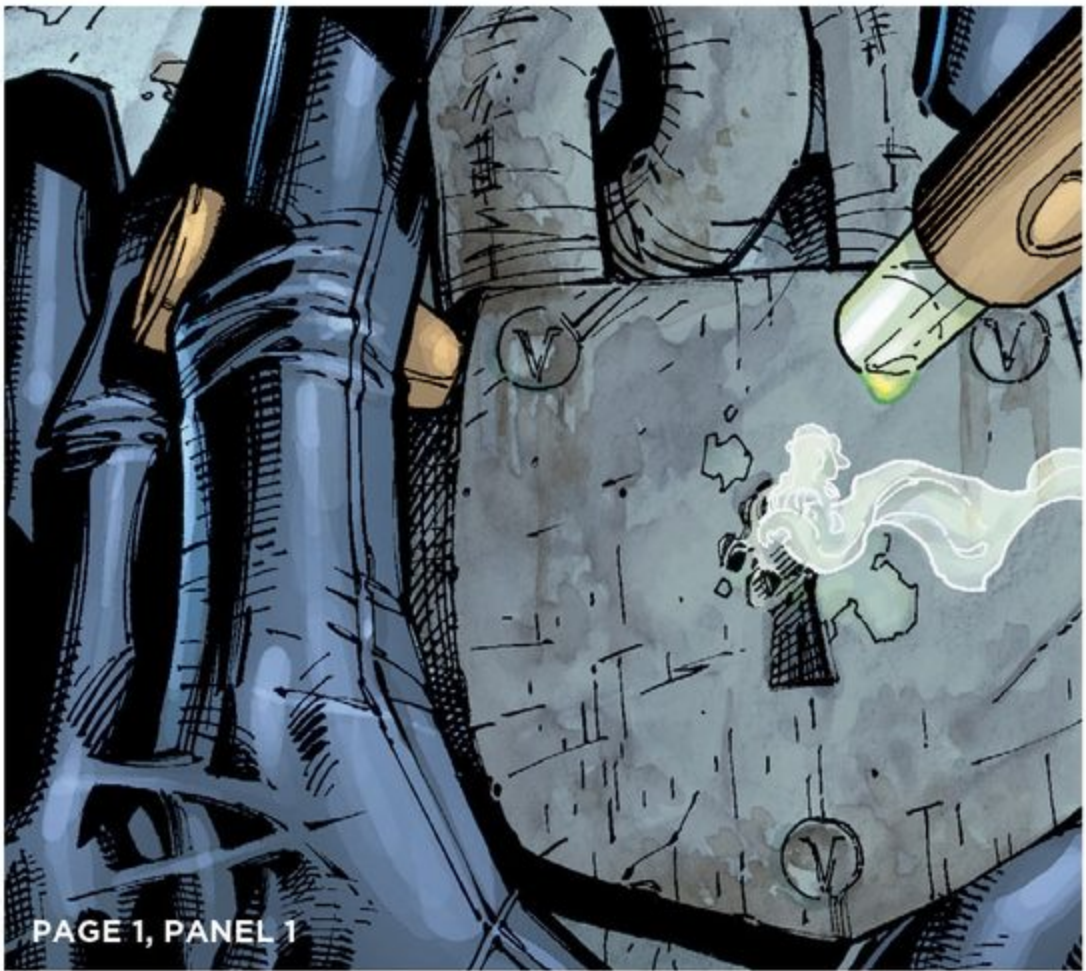
PAGE 16: The “Robin” sign in the background is meant as a homage to one of the legendary Batman creators Jerry Robinson. The “A” symbol on the other building is a nod to one of the marvelous super-hero teams a competitor publishes.

PAGE 17, PANEL 1: Signage for the corner building is named after longtime friend and WildStorm Executive Editor Scott Dunbier.

PAGE 18, PANEL 3: Signage behind Batman reads Voorhees Storage—the original Dutch spelling for Vorhies.

PAGE 19, PANEL 3: One of Voorhees' biggest and strongest competitors is the much better known Kal-El SuperStorage chain.

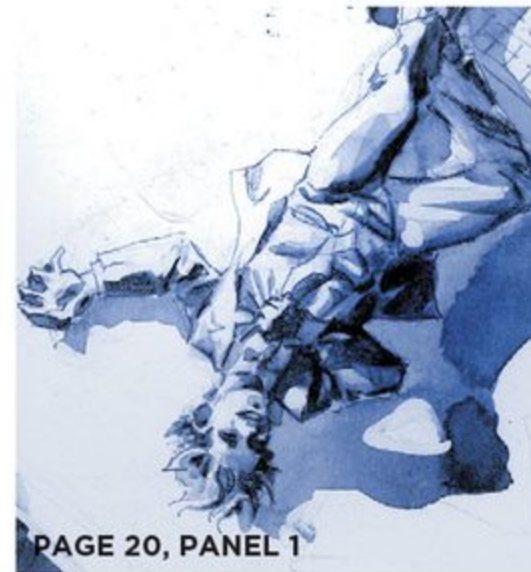
PAGE 21: SIDE NOTE: Catwoman has just stolen \$10 million. One hundred thousand \$100 bills. Yep, all in that itty bitty sexy stainless steel briefcase! Realistically, I bet you could vacuum pack \$500,000 in that case. Maybe a mill. Unfortunately from an art standpoint, it just would not have worked for Catwoman to be lugging a steamer trunk of cash on her back over the rooftops of Gotham. A better fix would be to say it was a million in cash and \$9 million in bearer bonds, whatever the heck those are. Sure sounds convincing though.



PAGE 1, PANEL 1



PAGE 18, PANEL 3



COVER: In the issue, Batman is pretty much a wreck—having been almost killed because of the machinations of two lovely but dangerous women as we saw in the previous issue. The cover seeks to represent both Batman’s pain and anguish and the bond between Ivy and Catwoman as depicted by the red rose in Catwoman’s hand and the cats perched on Ivy’s vine. It’s not an image that is meant to be taken literally—in fact those two little cats don’t even show up inside the issue! As the series rolls along—this cover will make even more sense.

PAGE 3: The Korean markings on the fella’s bandana is my original given Korean name. Yup, Jim is not the name I was given at birth. I chose it myself when I became a naturalized citizen when I was 12.

PAGE 5: The new Huntress costume...there is a tradeoff between armor and speed. You run around with 40 pounds of equipment and tell me how you feel after just 10 minutes. And for a character that is going to be spinning and kicking like she does in the next couple of pages...well, I just say—Fear the midriff! And she is called the Huntress! Not the Tanktress or Hunfortress. OK, that was just plain bad. One last note—lower left corner there is a piece of paper, which has “Dun...” on here. Yup—another obscure reference to Scott Dunbier—group editor of WildStorm.

PAGE 9: Someone thought this Batmobile was a redesign...sorry, same old Batmobile.

PAGE 15, PANEL 1: That would be an old-school Porsche 911 in the photo. Actually a model 993. Someone said that was the same kind of car wrecked in *Batman: Year One*. Someone else chimed in and said no, that was a Lamborghini. I think everyone was wrong; if memory serves, it sure looked like a Porsche 928—a model that Porsche-Audi incidentally no longer manufactures.

PANEL 5: That hospital was first seen in another book...anyone care to guess? The talented artist who envisioned this design saved me the hassle of coming up with something new and striking myself, and it’s always fun to make the city look consistent—especially between different Bat-projects.

PAGE 16: Yep, sharp eyes saw Dr. Shondra Kinsolving in panels 1 and 2.

PAGES 17-20: Someone suggested that Bruce and Tommy were playing Stratego but that I had obviously never played it since I painted it the way I did. Two corrections here. One, I play a mean game of Stratego. In fact, I have a killer setup I concocted when I was 10 I still think is unbeatable (yes, this was in the day before we had video games and the Internet...kids still managed to waste incredible numbers of hours doing nothing productive just like today...). And two, I used to make figures and set up “war games” on our family Ping-Pong table. So I’m pretty familiar with the gaming world. Drawing kids playing either Stratego or an old Avalon Hill war game didn’t seem visually striking enough to me. So I pulled out my artistic license card and made it up. Yep...it’s not real. Sorry to disappoint. And yes, I was and am a true geek. And love it or hate it, all the painted pages are my doing. Watercolors and pencils manipulated in PhotoShop and Painter. Except when I screw up—I have to go to acrylics.

PAGE 20, PANEL 1: Yep, Bruce’s “death” pose is both to mirror his own current predicament as seen on page one and serve as a harbinger of his parents’ future deaths. That’s what working with a great writer does for you. Thanks, Jeph.

PANELS 2-3: Yes, it’s true—GEN13 artist extraordinaire Alé Garza and his wife posed as Thomas and Martha. Alé is the one to the right in the last panel in case anyone was wondering.

PAGE 21, PANEL 2: Yep, there are plenty of fictional reporters in the background.

PAGE 22: Jeph and I improved all the newspaper text on the paper itself at the last second. Kudos to both Alex Sinclair and Wes and Richard at Comicraft for making it all look so nice. I hate fake newspaper “djsk sdaks dsa skd s d asididsakjdka dsad alds dsa ds a d sa da.” Know what I mean? And the quote Hush says...yep, it’s a quote from Aristotle. Not Onassis...think real old school.

Socrates>Plato>Aristotle.



PAGE 3



PAGE 8



PAGE 13



PAGE 19 PANEL 1

PAGE 3: That Arkham Asylum guard is named after Brad McQuaid, who is a friend of mine who works in the computer gaming world. He was one of the creators of one of the biggest massively multiplayer online role-playing games out there called *Everquest* published by Sony Online Entertainment. Not only does he live locally, but we share a lot of common interests outside of comics and games, and despite his propensity to get lost in virtual environments, he's one of the smartest guys you will meet from that business. He has his own company now; it's called Sigil Games Online and he and his multitasking crew are producing the next generation of MMO RPG games and so far, it sounds amazing what they are going to do. Unfortunately, he gets the big beatdown on the next page.

PAGE 7: Doesn't that look like the old Batmobile? OK I added some side venting à la the Ferrari 512 but you get the idea....

PAGE 8: Yeah, for you car enthusiasts...that's the Aston Martin Vanquish V-12 (which *btw* is a cool name for a car) in panel 1. Super car.

PAGE 11: There's that hospital again. No one bothered a guess from before, so I will spill the beans. That building first appeared in *BATMAN/DEATHBLOW* and was designed by studiomate Lee Bermejo. I was looking for things to incorporate into this run (like the blimps!), which would jibe with the Gotham he was doing, and since both our storylines featured hospitals...well, it made sense to me!

PAGE 13: Batmobile driving in front of that damn hospital again...it's everywhere!

PAGE 14, PANEL 4: That shot of the fist is a nod to the cover of *BATMAN STRIKES AGAIN*...in fact I wanted the sound effect to be DKSA! in the background...now you see why I'm not the writer.

PAGE 15, PANEL 2: Those bird "gargoyles" on the building are a nod to this one *Punisher Magazine* cover I painted loooong ago. Same bird design...which was, of course, originally inspired by the eagles from the Chrysler Building in New York City.

PAGE 18: Obvious Batman logo reflecting off Croc's eye in the last panel...wanted it to be more subtle, but then again...if it were any smaller—you wouldn't notice it at all, I suppose.

PAGE 19, PANEL 1: Hey, there are those 'copters from outside Arkham from page 7. Jeph sets up stuff like that all the time.

PAGE 20: Pilot in panel one is named "Danre" after a player from *Everquest* whose brother works with Brad at Sigil. No idea where he got the idea for the name since his name is neither Dan nor Ray. Building in the last two panels is also same one from issue 608, page 15...after all, the characters are near the waterfront...the shot where Batman and Catwoman first share a big frame together....

PAGE 22: Building in the lower left-hand corner says Sigil, Inc....named not after the comic book but the game company mentioned above. Being the bonehead I am, I forgot the trim line so it got cropped to just GIL, Inc. Which would be a nod to Gil Kane...one of the all-time greats...yah, that's it!



COVER: Yes, allusions to a crucifixion, but the inspiration was actually Da Vinci's Vitruvian Man. Yep, it's the image with the nekkid dude with his arms and legs laid out; the image is famous for showing the simple mathematical proportional relationships between man's various appendages. Ya know, the relationships us comic book artists throw out the Vitruvian window. And double yep, this is a conceptual cover. Image does not exist inside, but I did want to show the relationships between the characters. Catwoman is obviously entwined, enraptured, and encircled by Ivy's vines. And how do we know it's Poison Ivy's vines? Well, it says so in the lower left side by Catwoman's bent knee (turn the comic sideways and read from her knee down to the boot).

Despite the fact that most 'net devotees can find out what's coming up in future issues by monitoring *Diamond Previews*, Jeph and I still like to maintain the facade that we can surprise the audience. And that's why Superman is not on this cover but rather, is saved for his reveal on the ad before page 22. But of course, those of us who look at covers sideways knew that was coming since it's spelled out in the ivy ("Superman" read from Catwoman's left boot to her left knee).

Batman, in his most Dracula-inspired "Velcome to mah home" pose, is shown as a more graphical element than a true 3-D image—ready to envelop Catwoman in his own darkness (will it be enough to break the spell?!).

Of course, the story is in Metropolis so we need to show the *Daily Planet* and all this is happening in the shadow of LexCorp's twin-towered skyscraper.

PAGE 1: It's Metropolis so Jeph, Alex and myself wanted to go with gold hues to show how different the City of Tomorrow was from our own Gotham City. The airport design was influenced by my own memories of Lambert Airport in St. Louis where I grew up. I always thought the airport was the coolest as a little kid, and ya draw what ya know. Other buildings in the backgrounds are amalgamations of various hotels I have seen or stayed at (Pan Pacific for one from our own San Diego skyline).



PAGES 2-3: I don't know what the exact historic origins of Metropolis were, but I wanted to show that there were monuments within the airport which traced its history. So it's not Atlas and his brother(!) holding the globe in the background as Bruce descends on the elevator but a nod to Romulus and Remus... the idea that there were two brothers who helped forge Metropolis's early transportation history, the globe being a sphere made up of trainlike tracks and airline routes.

On various pages from 2 to 7, the watercolors were knocked out in a more brownish tint (an allusion to the golden city of Metropolis); would have made them more golden but they wouldn't print dark enough to see clearly.

Funny side story: I was in New York City for most of December when this issue was being colored and I needed to scan these pages in so I could make color adjustments in Photoshop to send to Alex Sinclair.

Of course, I procrastinate until the eleventh hour (actually it was 3 a.m.) and the deadline was the next day so I had to find a place in the city where I could scan in 11"x17" boards in the middle of the night on a Sunday no less. And that's why NYC is truly one of the greatest cities of all time. The place never sleeps. I call a print shop, which can do it (all others were closed or couldn't scan that size) but when I get there, hours after I made the call, the guy I spoke to is gone for the night. So I'm being told that the place is for commercial jobs only by a late night production supervisor until he spies the artwork I brought. Turns out he was a comic book fan when he was a kid ("I'm into video games now")...not only comics but Image Comics! I humbly bring up the fact that I was one of the co-founders of said company and next thing I know, I'm in their prepress room scanning away. I make the scans (on the house too!) and go back to make the final adjustments so I can FTP the files back to Alex in San Diego. Now there are so few times where being a "name" in comics amounts to anywhere beyond the confines of a comic book convention hall but this was one of those rare, fortunate times!

PAGE 8: In the third panel, there is a symbol on the building in the middle. It says WHAK SODA but it got a bit too blurred...it's a nod to a fictional pop drink a character was into from DIVINE RIGHT.

PAGE 11: Ahh, the *Daily Planet*...on the way hangs an in-joke newspaper edition...just my version of “Dewey defeats Truman.” On the cubicle walls behind Lois, there are several items...Alé Dance Studios (named after our own Alé “GEN 13/GRADUATION DAY” Garza)...*Wizard* deadline which was in effect for the Batman cover I did...I figure Lois wrote a piece or two for the magazine filling in for departing mailbag editor Jim McLaughlin as well...a nod to *Divine Right Adventures*—the Saturday morning spinoff cartoon (yeah, right!)...posties to collect bet money from Scott Dunbier, [Mike] Carlin...the last letters of my kids’ names...the word balloon covers a “Bruning for Governor” or something like that bumper sticker (see patriotic colors). All the other letters and fake stationery have some sort of backstory I forget now...it’s hard to just write gibberish on backgrounds; in fact, to make them “feel” authentic even though they are just scribbles—you still need to figure out in your mind what it is you are drawing...make sense?

PAGE 17: On the warehouse is “Plilo”...an infamous gnome wizard from a rather large, 133t guild *Everquest*. The real-life Plilo works at Sigil Games Online working on the next generation of MMO RPG games. This building is where he stores all his burnt-out video cards.





COVER: I thought this image might grab some people's attention...simply because it goes against the grain—against the way people have gotten used to seeing the power balance of these two icons play out. Someday it may happen this way too...and without Superman being under mind control.

PAGE 1, PANEL 2: Some people noted that this issue seemed to have less “detail” than previous issues...part of that impression must come from the fact that we are in Metropolis and we tried our best to differentiate the look of this City of Tomorrow from the baroque, gothic Gotham City. So by contrast, yes, the backgrounds are sleeker, less “crusty” and more colorful than our usual HUSH issues.

PAGE 1, PANEL 4: I love what Alex Sinclair did with the colors on this shot. Poifect!

PAGE 4: My favorite single page from the series so far in terms of layout (if I do say so myself) and colors.

PAGE 9: Jeph called out for a pose reminiscent of an old Superman model kit. Having had one of those myself as a kid and remembering how much I destroyed it by attempting to glue and paint it together all at once, I was able to reach back and grab a snapshot of the image from memory. Of course, I realize the model had his fist coming through a brick wall, but that's artistic license for ya.

PAGE 19: See! Not many eggs this ish...in panel 2—yep, that's a drawing of my bed that Ivy is sitting on. I don't have orange sheets or blue pillows, but the rest of the design is fairly accurate. The bed was designed by a local designer who also designed my desk which made its cameo in the first issue of my run on the *Fantastic Four*/"Heroes Reborn" project.

PAGE 20: I'm pretty sure that this is only the second time in my career that I have drawn a dog...and that was the hardest part of this page. Jeph told me my first take on it looked like an aardvark—someday that image may see the light of day; 'til then...if you squint while looking at this page...Krypto looks more like a dog, I have found.



PAGE 1, PANEL 1: The exterior of the Gotham opera house depicted is loosely based on a real-life opera house...first person to name it here correctly gets a free headshot of Batman. Those opera buffs lurking out there can really come on out and strut their stuff now.

Also on this page are my wife and I. In fact, I drew myself four times in this ish and Jeph twice. Also in the crowds are scores of heroes in their civilian wear—I doubt anyone will see most of them. I will mention some obvious ones as we roll along here.

PAGES 12-13: Lower right-hand corner of this DPS are WildStorm inker Sandra Hope, GEN13/GRADUATION DAY penciller Alé Garza, BATMAN-DEATHBLOW/HELLBLAZER artist Lee Bermejo, BLACK SUN artist Trevor Scott, *Bionicle/Thundercats* artist Carlos D'Anda and myself. Thanks to Alé for greeking in the caricatures. I'm horrible with likenesses while Alé is the cartooning master (he can draw anyone as a Simpsons-like cartoon character in seconds!).

PAGE 16: Bottom of last panel are Jeph and the late, great DC editor/writer Archie Goodwin who gave me my break in comics long ago. Also, there is someone who looks suspiciously like DC's Manager-Events & Retailer Services, Fletcher Chu-Fong.

PAGE 19, PANEL 2: Yep, Max Faraday and Devin from DIVINE RIGHT are in the crowd showing their appreciation for da Bats.

PANEL 6: In the background are Jeremy Stone, Zealot, Spartan, Voodoo (with a dye job!) and Gifter.

PAGE 22: Box Tommy's head is lying on Dontanville Produce (though the U came out as a O). Morgan is the former assistant editor on BATMAN and a good egg to boot. On the wall behind Joker are the names of some pivotal creators/editors in Bat history. The laughter pretty much obscures them, but many of them are represented here. Most likely, they will be more apparent in the next issue...which happens to be my personal favorite—storywise—of the run so far.



The cover on the Art of Jim Lee website is dated April 1st and is of course a joke...which is so appropriate given the villain for the issue is none other than the Joker himself.

PAGE 1: Starting in panel 1 and throughout the issue, I had a great time inking in my own background graffiti. As a tip of the hat to all the incredible talents who preceded Jeph's and my run on the Dark Knight, I just started dropping in random creators' names onto the wall behind Batman and Joker as they went at it tooth and claw in the back alley.

The hard part came later when I decided I wanted all the background graffiti to match up somewhat, so I had to start keeping track of the elements and where they were in relationship to the characters and to each other.

Funny thing is that many fans thought all the "Robins" on the wall and throughout the run (for example, the hotel signage in BATMAN #610) were secret hints as to the identity of Hush. The truth was and is that the "Robins" are "Robinsons" which were truncated by the panel borders. Robinson as in Jerry Robinson, co-creator of the Joker and Robin.

Other names sprinkled liberally throughout the issue are Bob Kane, Irv Novick, Sheldon Moldoff, Frank Miller, Bill Finger, Neal Adams, Dick Sprang, Jim Aparo, Bob Brown, David Mazzucchelli, Don Newton, Carmine Infantino, Jim Starlin, Bob Schreck, Marshall Rogers and many, many more.

PAGE 7, LAST PANEL: Bit of debris to the far right reads: Nepy, Bard. A friend from *Everquest*, an online fantasy role-playing game, who played a Bard in the game, also in the same guild as Brad McQuaid, one of the key creators of the popular game.

PAGE 10, PANEL 3: Not too subtle but I purposely evoked the Bat symbol in the shadow Oracle casts with her wheelchair onto the floor. An allusion to who she had been before.

PAGE 15: There are four Jokers hidden in this splash... I think I should have said five and waited to see how long readers would keep searching for that last, oh so elusive one. But instead, I will be nice.

PAGE 17, PANEL 1: Foreground left is a Phatboy Pizzeria Box, the fictional pizza chain where Max Faraday from WildStorm's *DIVINE RIGHT* worked before he broke out in superheroics.

PAGE 21: Signage reads Whak Cola, a fictional drink which happens to be Max Faraday's beverage of choice.

PAGE 22, PANEL 1: In the background is the Roman's penthouse building from *LONG HALLOWEEN*. Meant to be a subtle red herring, which are the best kind as they better create doubt and deception.



PAGE 1, PANEL 3: Tombstones carry last names of several key *Wizard* writers.

PAGES 2-3, THIRD PANEL: Not really an Easter egg, but a bit of backstory. Tommy and Bruce are attending a prep school where you wear coats and ties. I went to one as well and yep, we often flipped our ties over our shoulders or tucked them into our shirts between the second and third button to keep food from dropping onto them.

PAGE 5: Top grave reads “Michael Cray”...a mercenary code-named Deathblow in the WildStorm universe who died to save his universe.

PAGE 8, PANEL 3: The big question mark is a real hint to who Hush is.

Double meanings galore.

PAGES 10-11: Yep, every Batmobile I could find reference for from the ones found in Dorling Kindersley’s Batman reference book to the various movie and TV vehicles.

Far back in the middle I even snuck in Batman’s T. rex, giant penny and Batcopters and mini-Batman plane. Top right you can see his main computer work area, high above in the cave. Personally, I see his Batcave being much smaller, but this was the current layout in continuity and after seeing its scale, I went to town and probably made it a bit larger and more elaborate than designed.

PAGE 12, LAST PANEL: Blurry van on bridge reads “Halo Industries” which is the cover company for the WildCATS in the WildStorm universe.

PAGE 13, TOP PANEL: Signage on building reads “Garza Dance Studios” named after Alé Garza, natch, dancer boy supreme of WildStorm Studios.

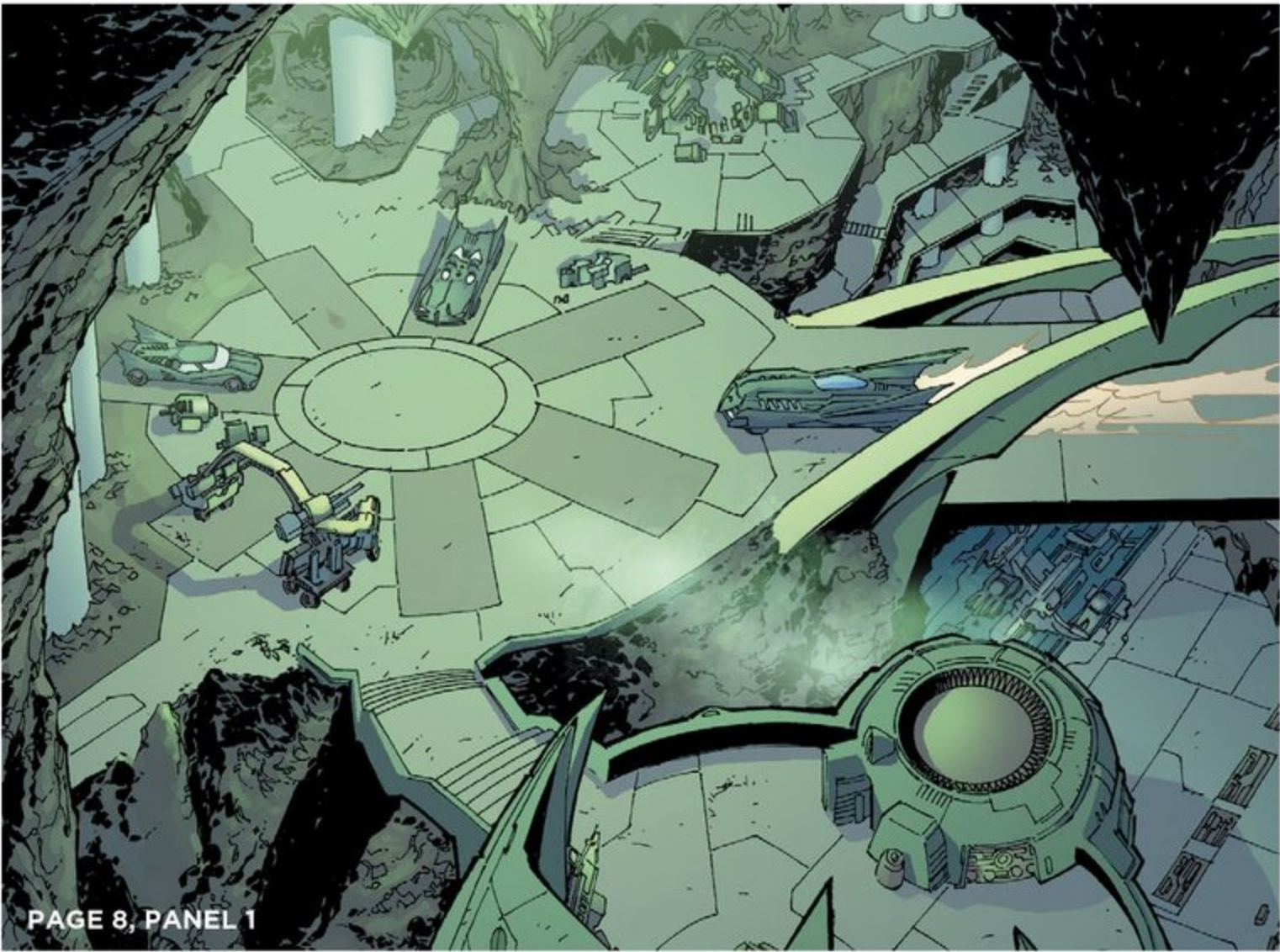
PAGE 15, TOP PANEL: “Risso” refers to Eduardo Risso, the incredible artist of Vertigo’s 100 BULLETS, which also seems to be a name of some kind of store in Gotham City (see far right of first panel).

PAGE 16, TOP PANEL: The pharmacy is named after John Nee, former bigwig at WildStorm and DC. Below that sign is a diner named after my wife.

PAGE 19, PANEL 2: A cocktail bar named after Alex Garner and a hotel named again after my wife. In panel 4 is a sign for Ogre’s tattoo parlor. Ogre is a pal who is related to Will Dennis, a great editor over at Vertigo.

PAGE 20, PANEL 2: Was trying to be clever and spell out 1939 (the year of the Batman’s first appearance in DETECTIVE COMICS #27) but I was doing this page way late at night, and my feeble brain couldn’t put it together correctly, instead spelling out 1 thousand, 9 hundred, 3 hundred and 9. D’oh! We should fix that for this edition!

BATMAN #616



PAGE 8, PANEL 1

PAGE 8, PANEL 1: If you look closely, you can see the infirmary where Alfred fixed up Bruce in BATMAN #610, the parking garage carousel where Batman stores his cars on the bottom floor and see that this still fits in nicely with Dorling Kindersley’s map of the Batcave in their *Batman: Ultimate Guide to The Dark Knight*. That reference book was invaluable in organizing and setting up these kinds of shots and environments.



PANEL 3

PAGE 8, PANEL 3: The writing on the sword says “sale” or something to that effect. Found it on a sign at a store in Bologna, Italy. Which is where I was staying. In fact, the fight sequences between Batman and Ra’s and Catwoman and Shiva were all done in a hotel in Bologna.

BATMAN #617



PAGE 8, PANEL 1

PAGE 8, PANEL 1: Apparently the T. rex and giant penny were written out of continuity. They make their comeback in this shot to the right! Got to love the bizarre props; it goes to show you how strange Batman’s world is.

PAGE 9, PANEL 1: The small, green cycle to the right is what Grifter of the WildCATS rides.



PAGE 22

PAGE 17, PANEL 3: Spot Gene Grey’s tombstone in the weeds?

PAGE 18, PANEL 1: ...here lies Fug Ligh, brunt of many a bar joke.

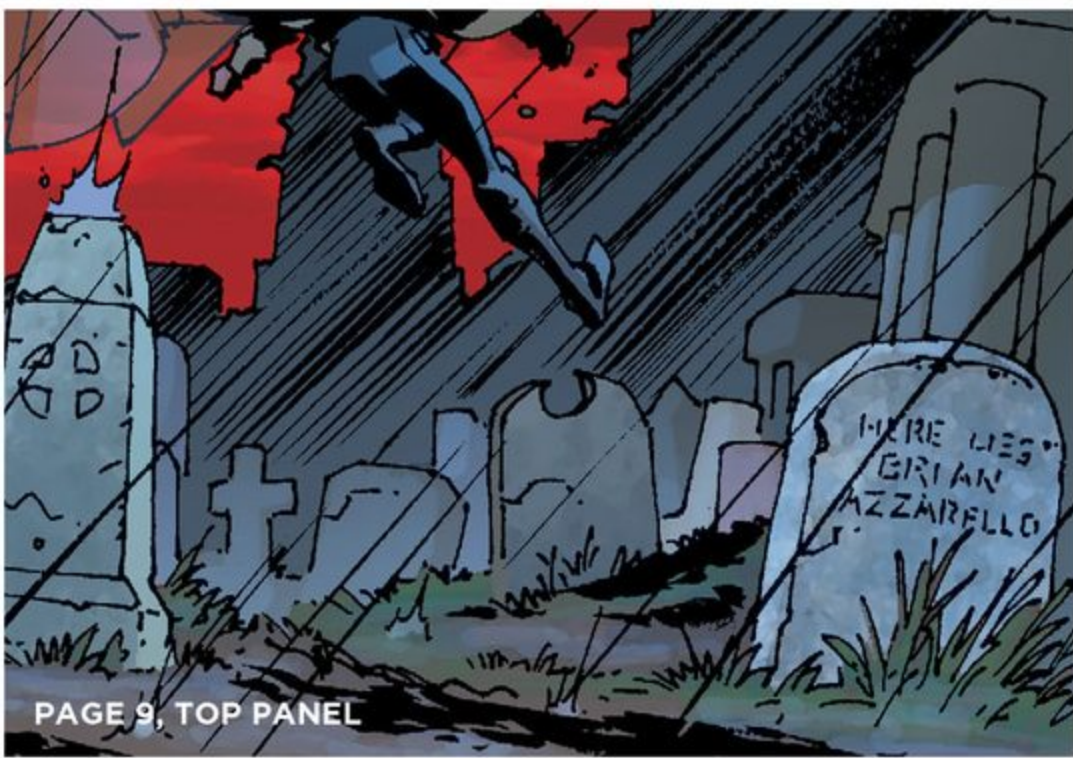
PAGE 22: Far left is the tombstone for Albert Moy, my art rep. Under his name it reads RIP—raking in percentages.



PAGES 2-3, PANEL 1: Here lies Gwen Sta—something, right?

All the famous comics deceased are interred in Gotham.

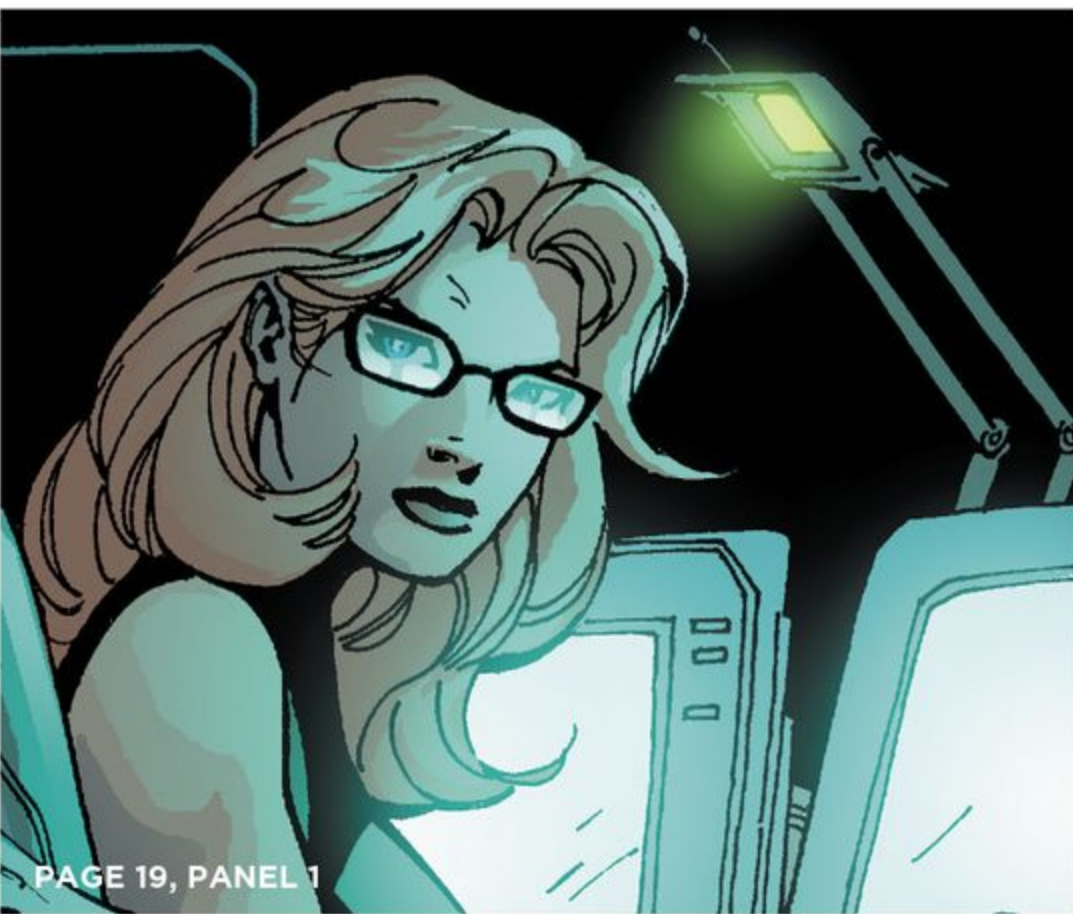
PAGE 6: “Jason Todd” a.k.a. Clayface here was supposed to have morphed into this form based on Dick Grayson/ Nightwing’s DNA—here Jeph and I reinforce that idea by having him fight in the same style as Nightwing as seen earlier in BATMAN #615, page 16, panel 1.



PAGE 7, PANEL 5: The far left tombstone is cropped but it reads “Rest in Peace, Will Dennis.” Will is an editor for Vertigo and one of my editors on SUPERMAN: FOR TOMORROW.

PAGE 9, TOP PANEL: Far right tombstone mentions Brian Azzarello, my writer on SUPERMAN: FOR TOMORROW. At this point in the Hush storyline, I already knew that a year-long run on Superman with Brian would be my follow-up project.

PAGES 12-13: General note: all the buildings in this issue are a mishmash of styles and elements from such architectural marvels such as the Notre Dame, the Cologne Dom, and various churches and edifices in Bologna, Italy, and Essen, Germany.



PAGE 19, PANEL 1: The little green desk light to the right of Oracle is the same one I use here in my home studio, ’cept mine isn’t green.

PAGE 20, TOP PANEL: Some of the background buildings taken from BATMAN/DEATHBLOW, designed by artist Lee Bermejo. Panel 2 has Infantino Parkway and Mazzucchelli Drive—again nods to Batman creators past.

PAGES 2-3, PANEL 1: William Woo Parkway named after a buddy of mine who owns a comic book store out east who also happened to be the high bidder on the original art to my *X-Men* #1 vol. 2 back at Sotheby's first comic book and collectibles auction.

PAGE 13, LAST PANEL: Strange bit of trivia. Whenever you see a clock or watch in *HUSH*, I generally never drew in the hands to indicate time. Most of the time, I didn't know or couldn't tell the exact time the scenes took place by reading the script and would have called Jeph to inquire in person but I was usually drawing the pages very late at night. By the time morning came about and I was awake and recovered, I usually forgot to call Jeph and so we generally asked the colorist, Alex Sinclair, to go in and indicate a time once we all chatted with Jeph to come to some sort of temporal consensus.

PAGE 19, PANEL 9: Enter guard McQuaid again, buddy gamer of mine. I gave him this page since he is a knowledgeable comic book fan and collector.



PAGES 2-3, PANEL 1



PAGE 13, LAST PANEL



PAGE 19, PANEL 9



BATMAN: HUSH

EXTRAS

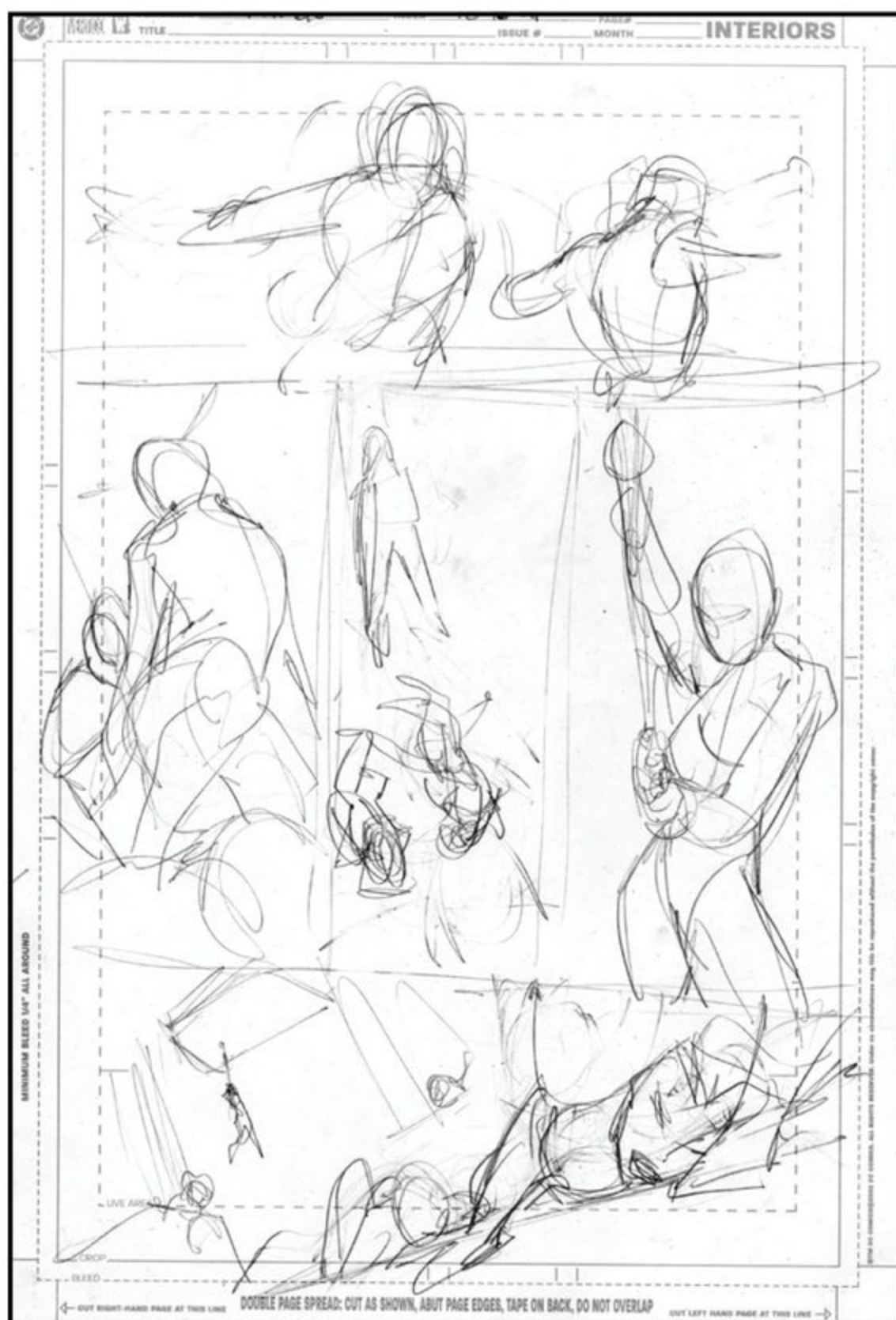
JIM LEE'S STEP-BY-STEP

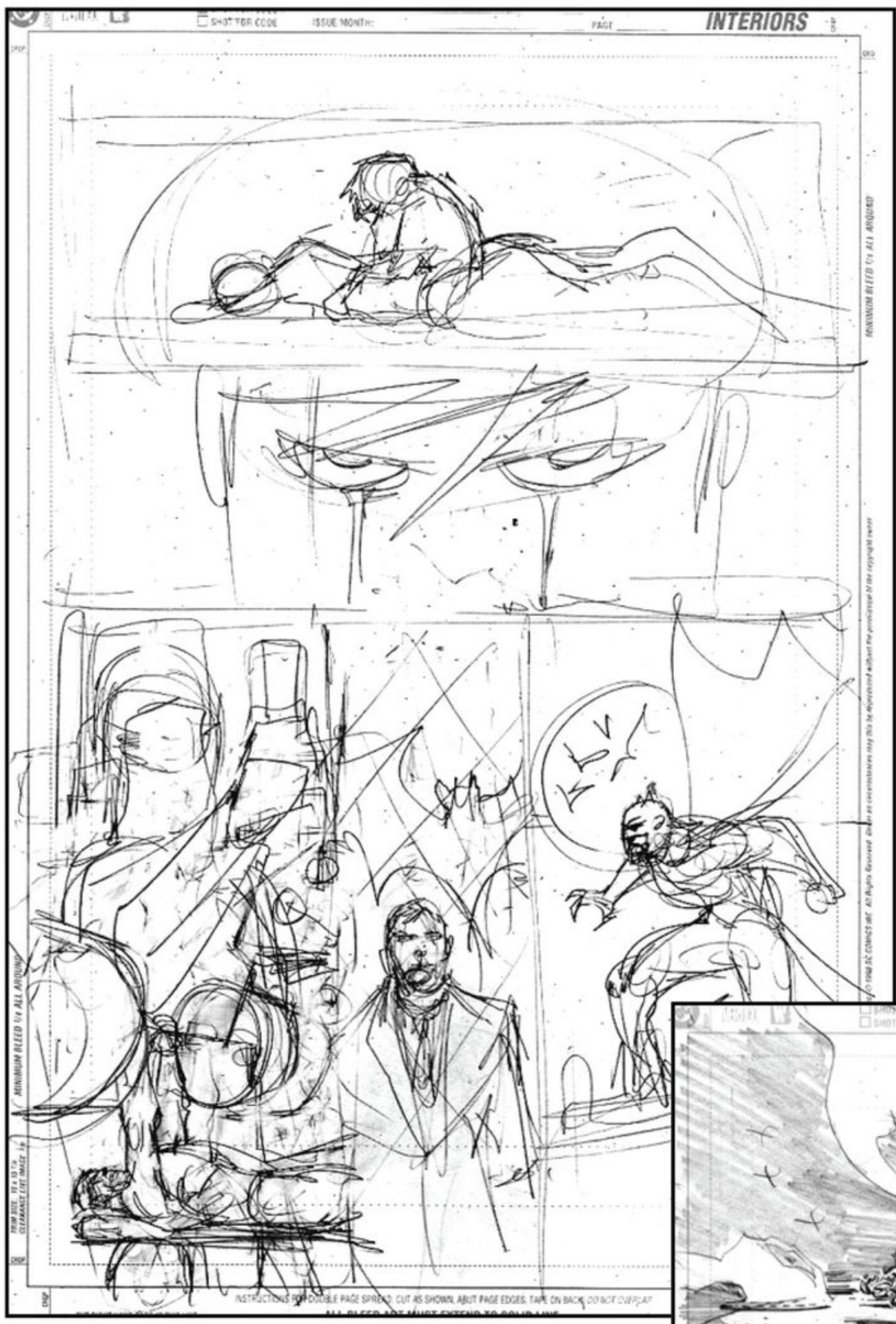
From Jeph Loeb's script, Jim does a rough pencil to establish the look of the page. Then he goes in to tighten up the details.

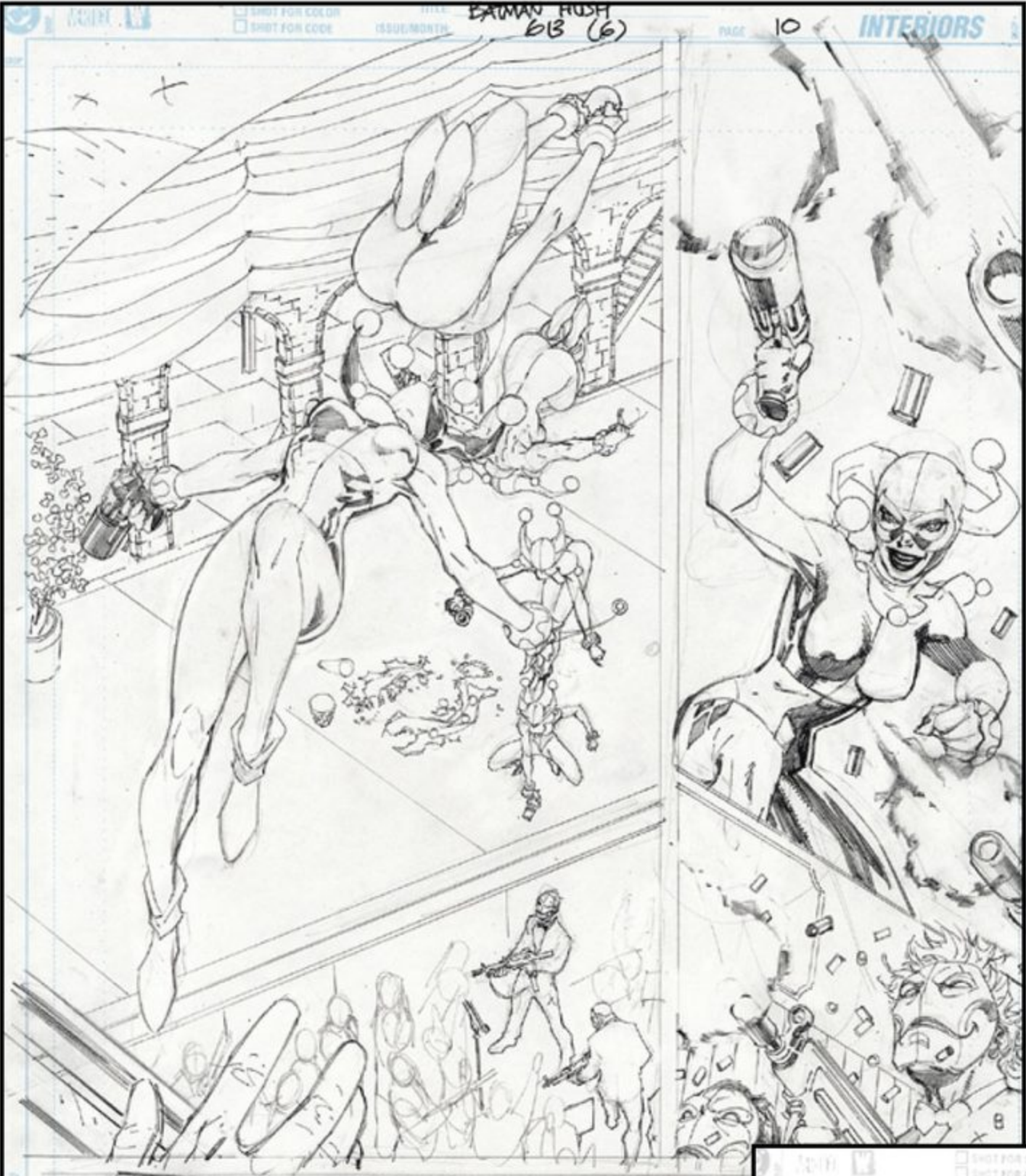














The top page was the final pencilled page for the Harley Quinn issue...or so I thought. After Jeph saw it, he called me up and felt the last panel needed a background to establish a sense of place. I thought having drawn the backgrounds in the dramatic double-page spread the page before had established the environment fairly well, but I guess deep down, I knew he was right and I was just trying to sneak one by there to beat the deadline. After the brief discussion, I pulled the page out of the scanner and dropped in the background and sure enough, Jeph's instincts were 100% spot on. I hate when that happens ☺



Not much of a change in this page, but I have a habit of drawing pages in a book out of order and I had already drawn the page following this one in which Batman is shown kicking in the door through which Harley Quinn escapes. To fix story continuity, I redrew a small part of the last panel so the door would be closed, setting up Batman's dramatic kick the following page.



I initially thought having Nightwing hanging upside down like a certain web-headed super-hero would be kind of cool, kind of different and a good way to show how Nightwing was a very different type of personality than Batman, the Dark Knight. Since I hadn't really drawn the top part of the back of the armored truck, it looked odd to me so I scrapped it and went with something more traditional and had him just walk up to the opening. I hate having to erase perfectly fine drawings, but I hate bad storytelling even more.

Our ability to affect the editorial status quo changed as the series got rolling. Initially, Jeph wrote the scene so that Batman pulled off his cowl to reveal his secret identity to Catwoman. The editorial powers intervened so I drew it like in the top shot...with Batman keeping his cowl on. Later, after much discussion, it was decided that it was a stronger story if Batman made the decision to trust Selina with his big secret and off came the cowl. By this time, the page was already inked so I just went in and pencilled Bruce's face as shown in the bottom page and we photoshopped it and pasted it on over my copy of the initial pencils (top). Assured it was the right size and angle, Scott Williams then inked the patch, and we dropped it in, just making our deadline.

PRODUCT DESIGNS

Jim Lee was asked to sketch a Catwoman statue, so he did the same pose from several angles. Here is the finished DC Direct statue.



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COMING
OUT
OF
SKYHUNT
2.

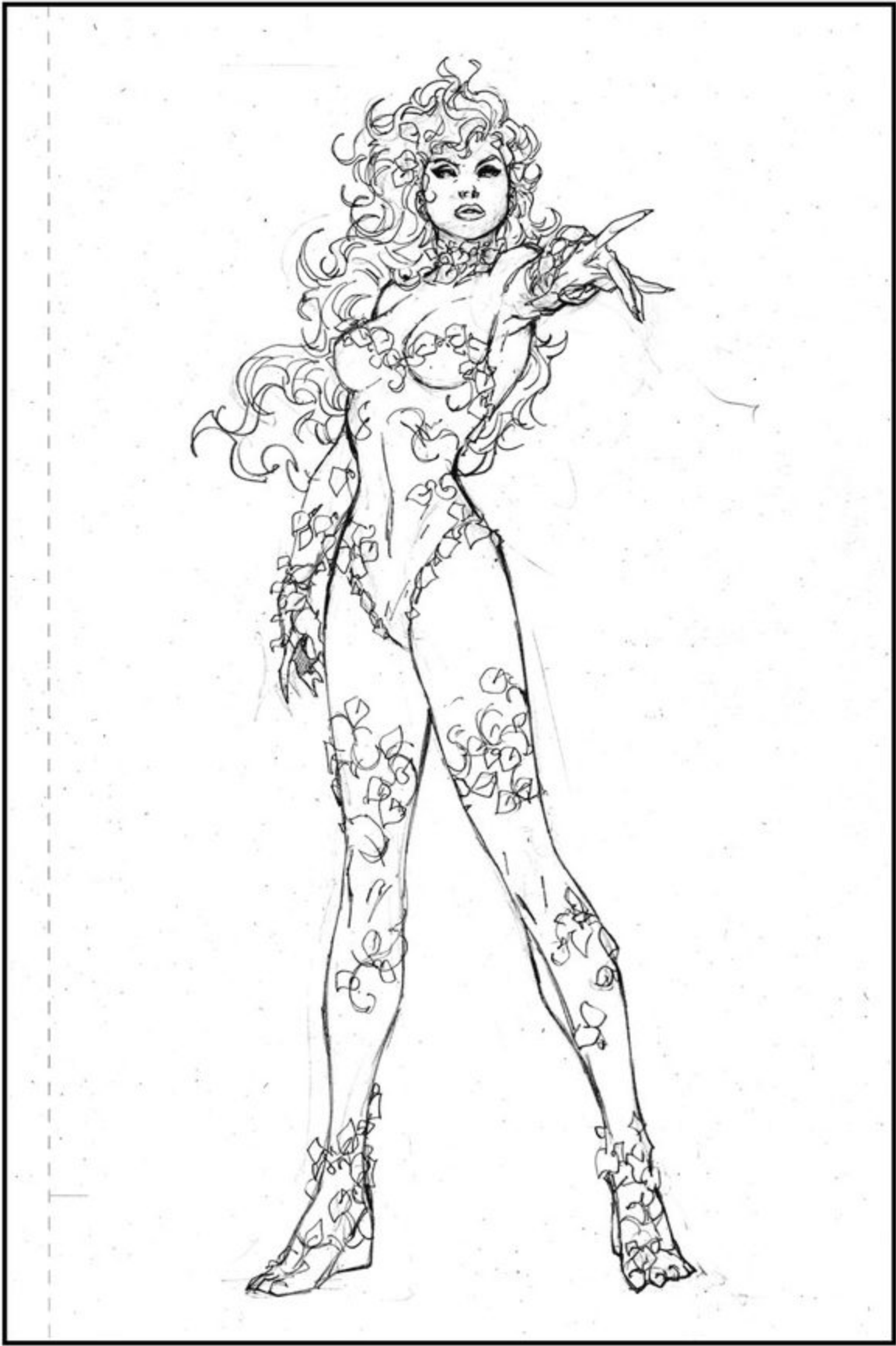
CIRCLE
CUT INTO
GLASS ON
THIS SIDE

YES I'M A CAT

Jim also did some character studies that became the basis of the HUSH action figure line.





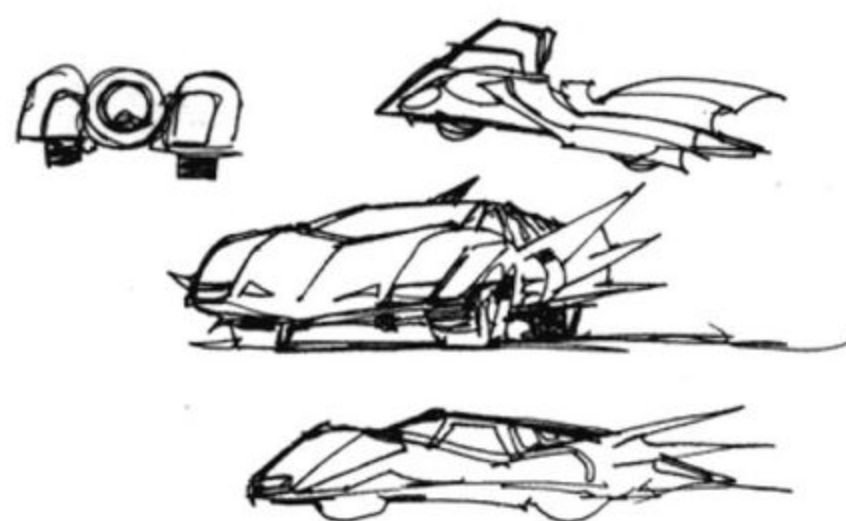




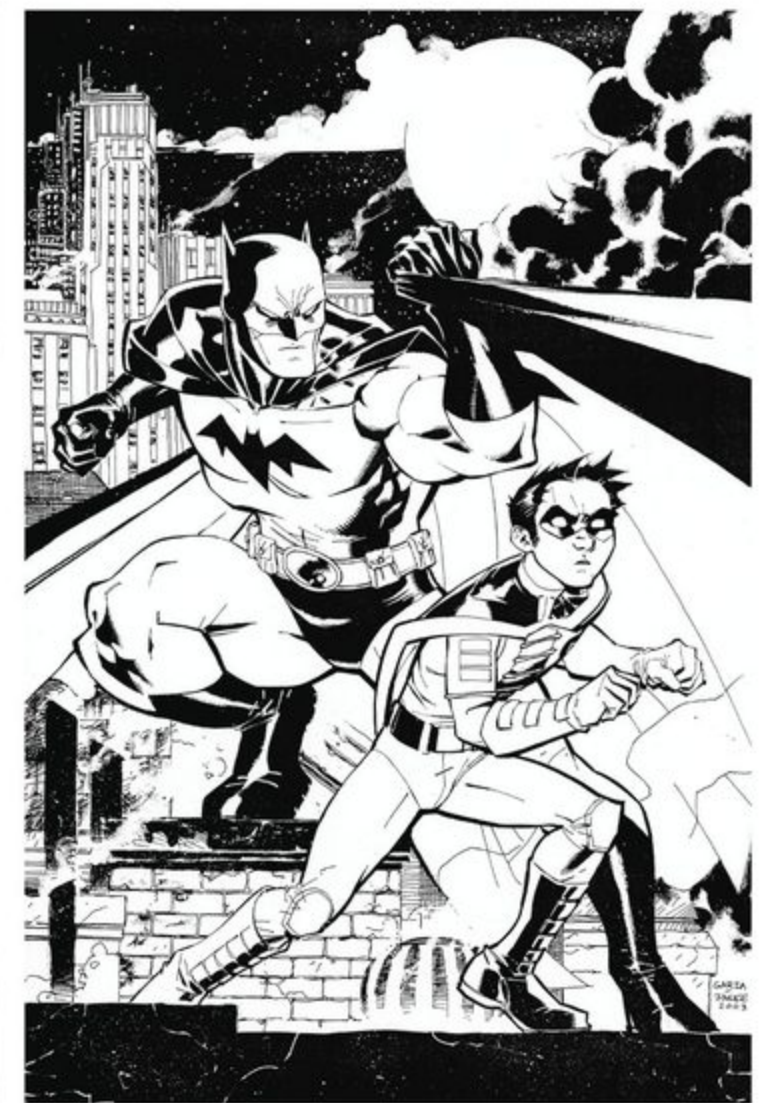
BATMAN: HUSH
SKETCHBOOK



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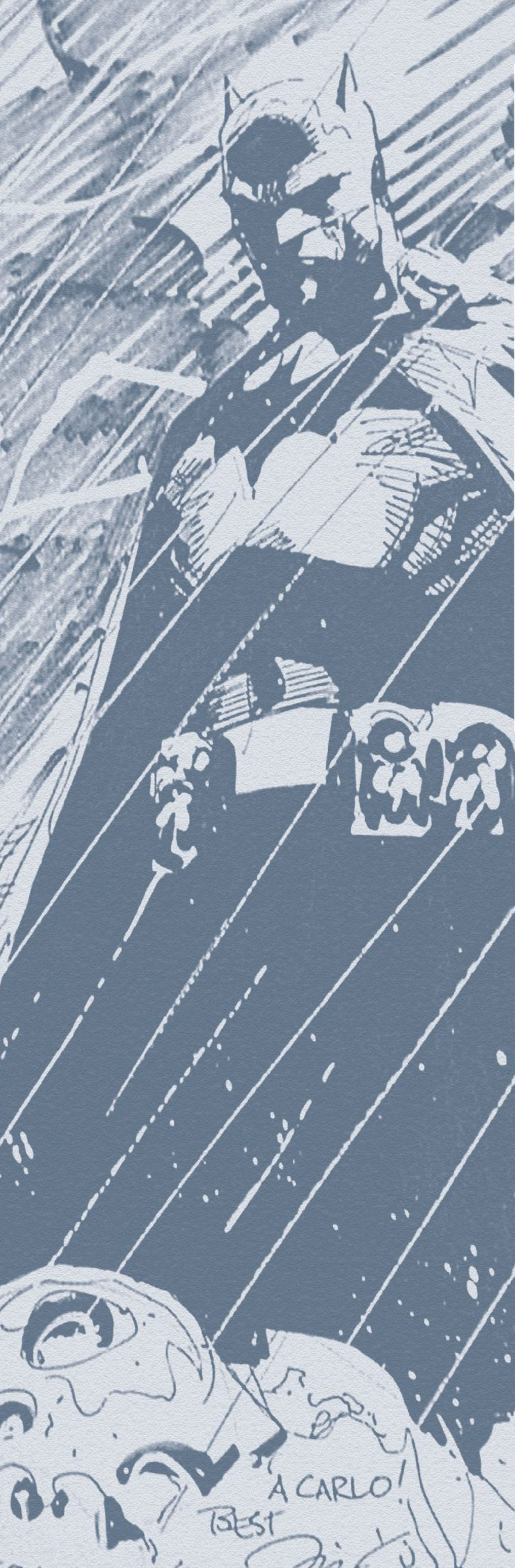






J. MLEE
2002





MADONNA...
UN SCHIZZO
COME DIAVOLO
COMMANDA...



AD ALESSANDRO!

mi
ALGHERO
DOPO 2 TEQUILA!
11. MAGGIO. 2004



AD ALESSANDRO!
VAI GRANDE!
MITICO!

mi
ALGHERO
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A CARLO!

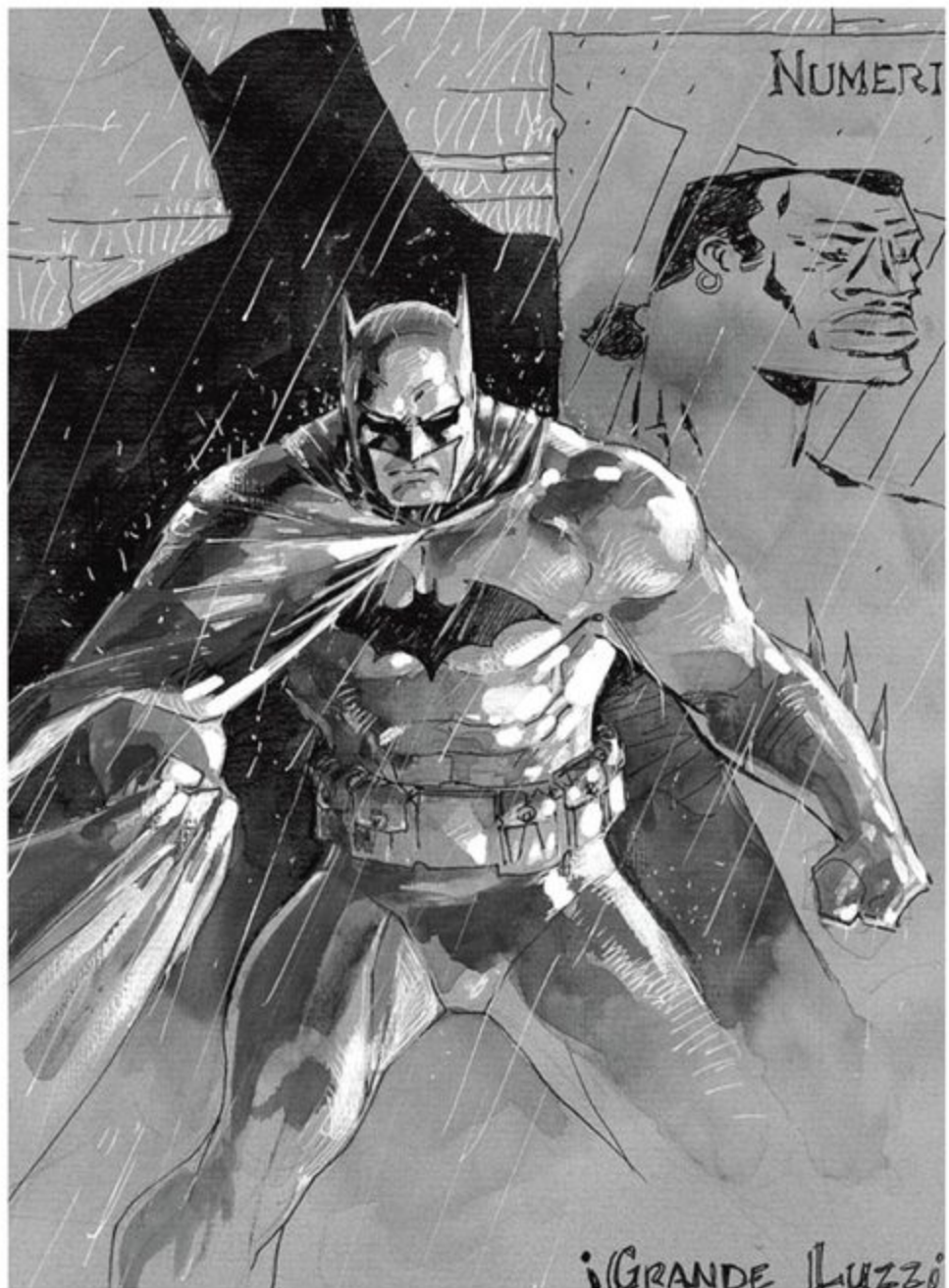
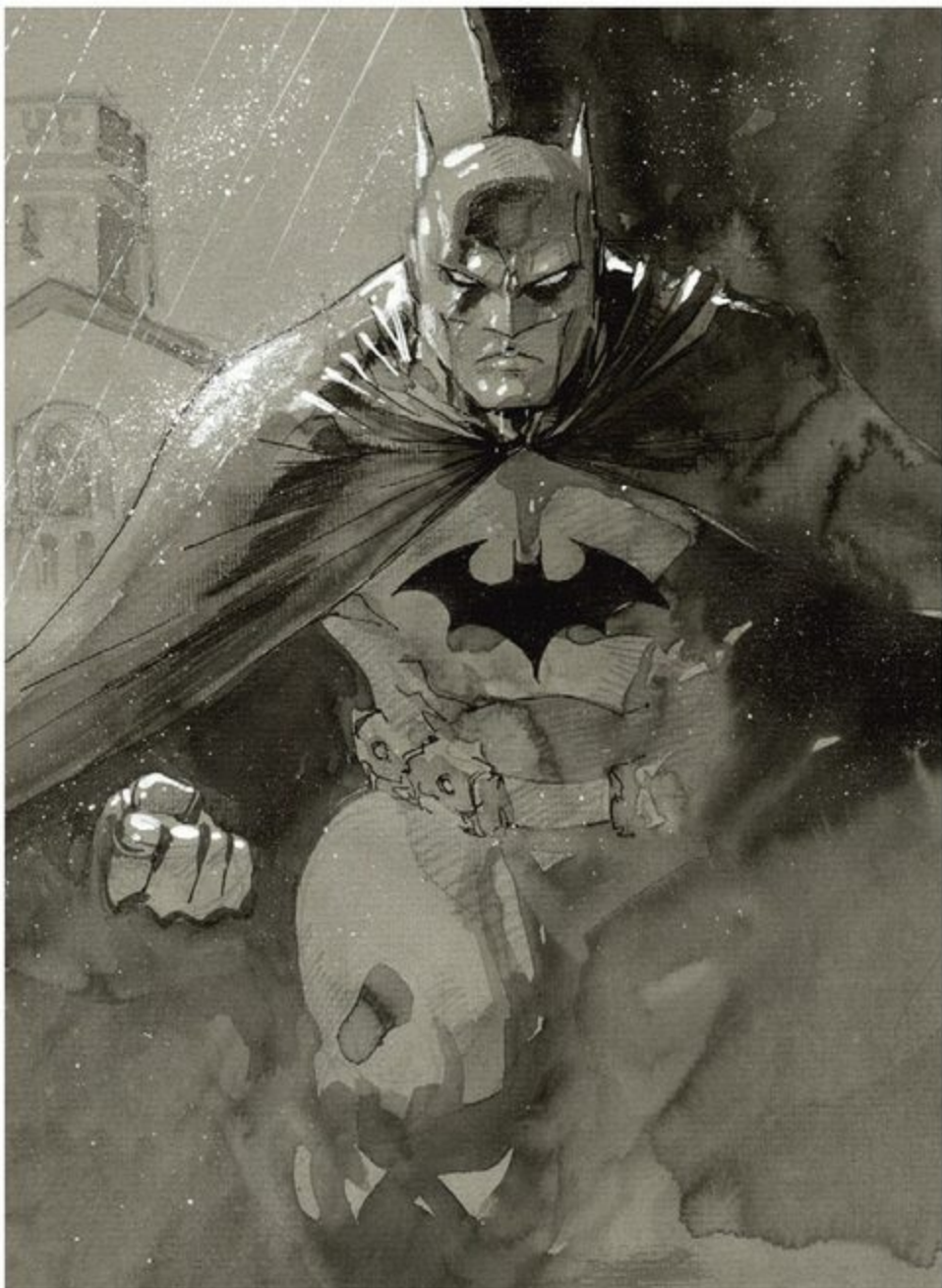
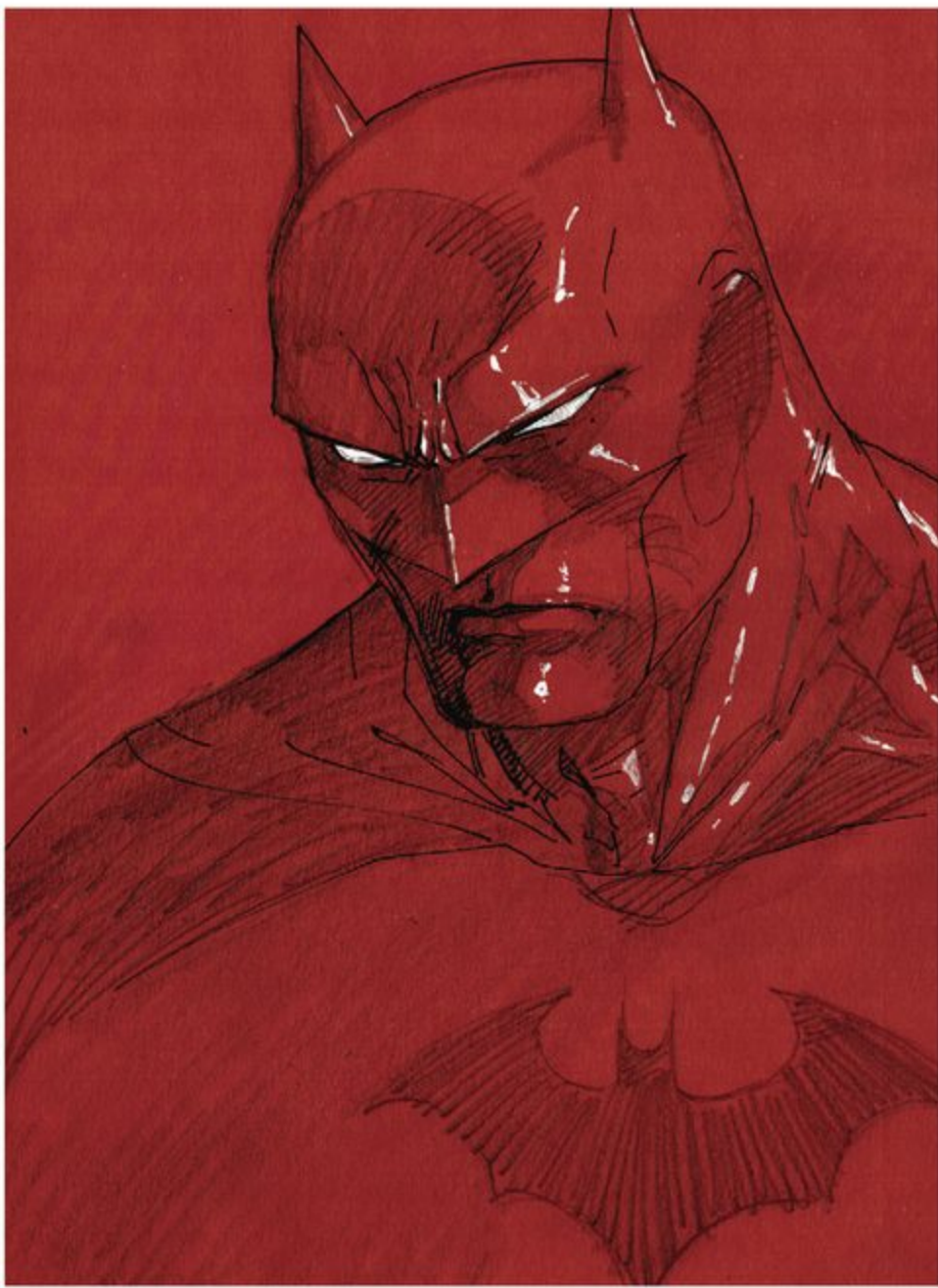
BEST



HOLEY
MENSCHENS-
KINDER, BATMAN!
WAS FÜR EINEN
UNGLÜCKLICHEN
PASCH!

FÜR BIGGI!
BEST

Jul
ERLANGEN 2004



To
DARREN!

CONGRATS + BEST -

Phil

JUNE 8, 2003



TO BRENDAN & PHIL!

CONGRATULATIONS ON
COLISEUM OF COMICS

20th
ANNIVERSARY!!!

BEST -
SMILE

(Brendan)
HOPE

CLANDIA
ALEXANDRO





JIM LEE
11/11/14





ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This one's for Mark Chiarello, who took a very silly notion...that Jim Lee and I could actually put out a monthly Batman comic...and turned the dream into a reality. And along the way said some of the nicest things anyone has ever said about my work and for that, I am especially grateful.

JEPH LOEB

In addition to the usual suspects mentioned before in the introduction, I would like to thank those “off-panel” who worked just as hard on HUSH but with far less fanfare. Much respect to designer Robbin Brosterman for making HUSH the classiest collection of my work (ever!); Robbin took great care with the smallest of details and made all the elements come together beautifully. Tip of the cap to Bob Greenberger for going the extra mile to make the collections chock-full of extras. Kudos to the marketing team—Bob Wayne, Patty Jeres, Matt Keller and Adam Philips—who continually pushed HUSH to higher plateaus. Big thanks to the crew at *Wizard*—Casey, Brian and Matt—who believed from the start. A big ol’ shout out to P Didi for hooking up the paper, and Alison Gill for checking out those rips and making sure the linework printed better with each passing issue. Two thumbs up to Mike Carlin, Richard Bruning and Scott Dunbier for the 1k of inspiration, and of course, Fletch, for being so friendly with the fans. Last but certainly not least, I want to thank Alé, Carlos, Lee, Richard, Sandra and Trevor for the camaraderie, and my wife and kids for their sacrifices. Without their support and inspiration, none of this would have been possible.

JIM LEE

Sometimes, everything just clicks. You know, the planets are lining up, fate, or even dumb luck. I'm not sure which of these clichés might apply, but I do know that BATMAN: HUSH just clicked. I've worked on more than a few comic book projects in my career, and this one was the most rewarding. It was probably also the most challenging. The creative bar was raised so high by Jim, Jeph, Alex and Richard, I struggled mightily to avoid being the weak link in the artistic chain. That struggle really forced me to take chances and stretch in ways I didn't think possible. And that, more than anything, is why I thank my colleagues for allowing me to be a part of something special.

SCOTT WILLIAMS

Thanks to Wes Abbott at Comicraft for his lettering assistance.

RICHARD STARKINGS

I would like to thank Jim, Scott, Jeph and Richard for letting me be a part of the team; Bob Schreck and Michael Wright for putting up with us; my wife Rebecca and daughters Grace, Blythe, Meredith, and Harley for their continued support and inspiration; and the fans for making this a memorable run with one of the best characters in comics.

ALEX SINCLAIR





JEPH LOEB

is an Emmy Award-nominated and Eisner Award-winning writer/producer living in Los Angeles. His many credits in television include *Smallville*, *Lost* and *Heroes*, and *Teen Wolf* and *Commando* in film. In comics he is best known for his work with supremely talented artist and partner-in-crime Tim Sale on *BATMAN: THE LONG HALLOWEEN*, *SUPERMAN FOR ALL SEASONS* and *CATWOMAN: WHEN IN ROME* for DC as well as *Daredevil: Yellow*, *Spider-Man: Blue* and *Hulk: Gray* for Marvel.

JIM LEE

is a renowned comic book artist and the publisher and chief creative officer of DC Entertainment. In addition to his executive positions, he is also the artist for many of DC Comics’ best-selling comic books and graphic novels, including *SUPERMAN: FOR TOMORROW*, *JUSTICE LEAGUE: ORIGIN*, *SUPERMAN UNCHAINED* and *SUICIDE SQUAD*. He also served as the Executive Creative Director for the DC Universe Online (DCUO) massively multiplayer action game from Daybreak Games.

SCOTT WILLIAMS

From an early age, Scott Williams knew he wanted to be a working artist, and in 1985 he turned a passion for comic books into a long-lasting career. Collaborating with many top talents, Scott began working as an inker on many of Marvel’s flagship titles, like *Punisher* and *X-Men*, where he eventually crossed paths with budding superstar Jim Lee. A friendship and partnership of 30 years ensued, producing memorable runs on such titles as *WILDC.A.T.S*, *BATMAN*, *SUPERMAN*, *ALL-STAR BATMAN & ROBIN*, *THE BOY WONDER*, *JUSTICE LEAGUE* and more. Showing no signs of slowing down, the penciller/inker team continue to produce dynamic and evolving comics art for tomorrow’s readers.

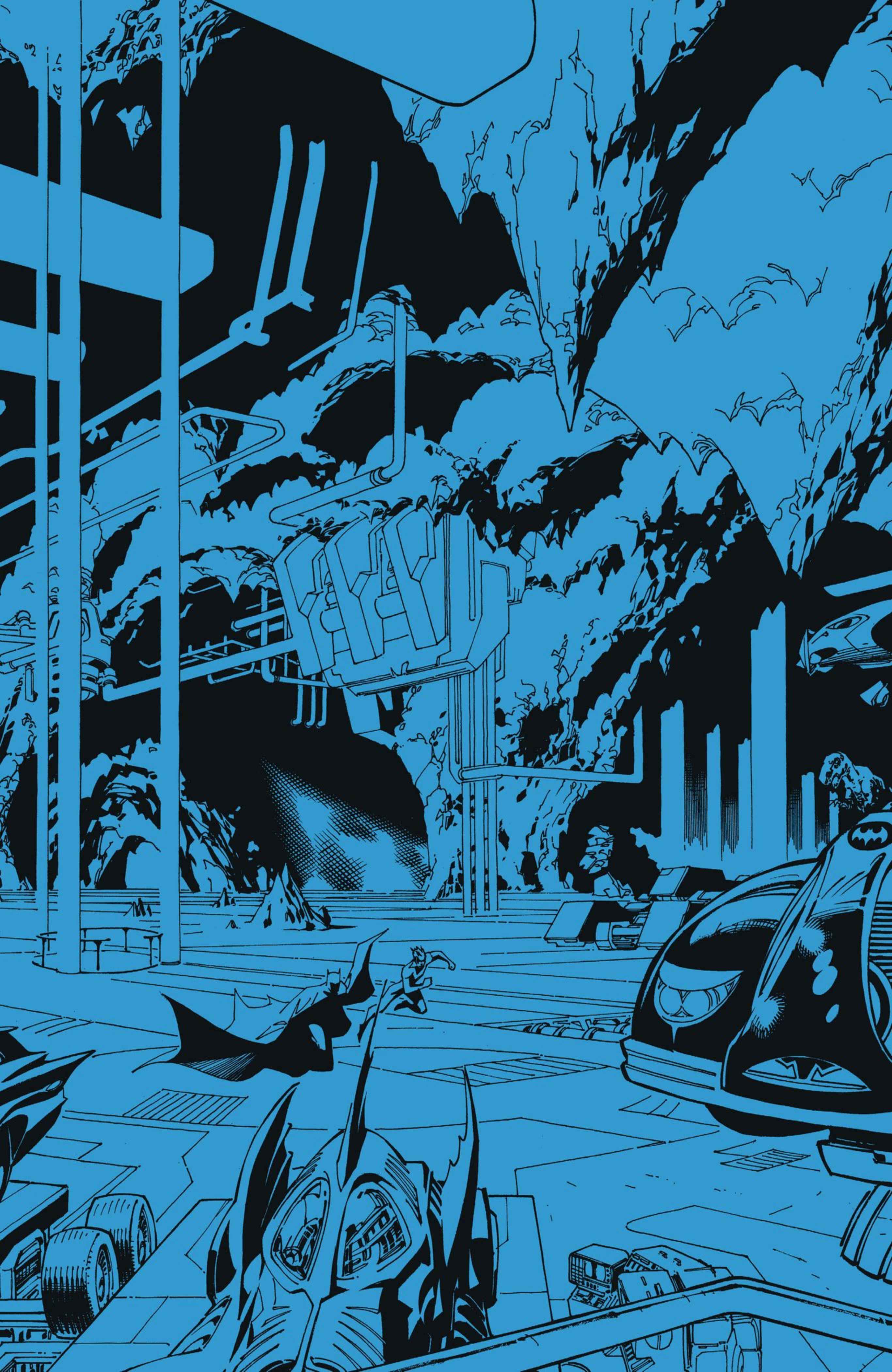
ALEX SINCLAIR

grew up reading comics with his older brother, Dante. The two have many fond memories of terrorizing their sister while wearing their Batman and Robin costumes, and after 15 years as a professional colorist he still considers the Dynamic Duo to be some of his favorite characters. His other work includes *BATMAN: HUSH*, *SUPERMAN*, *WONDER WOMAN* and *JLA*. He lives in San Diego with his wife, Rebecca, and four sidekicks, Grace, Blythe, Meredith and Harley.

RICHARD STARKINGS

is best known as the creator of the Comicraft studio, purveyors of unique design and fine lettering—and a copious catalog of comic book fonts—since 1992. He is less well known as the creator and publisher of *Hip Flask* and his semi-autobiographical cartoon strip, *Hedge Backwards*. He never seems to get tired of reminding people that he lettered *BATMAN: THE KILLING JOKE* with a pen.

B I O G R A P H I E S



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IGN

"[HUSH] make[s] readers look at Batman and his colleagues with a fresh, enthusiastic eye."

PUBLISHERS WEEKLY, STARRED REVIEW

"The art is stunning and beautiful."

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"This is the big, loud, action movie version of Batman."

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